

STARS AND STRIPES®

Texas does its best to muddle BCS picture

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Texas running back Cedric Benson

Some U.S. troops rediscover faith on battlefield

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Scene magazine

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2004

\$1.00

U.S. forces in Europe to receive COLA hike

Next paycheck will reflect 31 percent increase to offset weak dollar

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Wisconsin community begins mourning slain hunters

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Mourners gather near the grave site of Mark Roidt, 28, on Friday after funeral and burial services for Roidt at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Dobie, Wis. The funeral for Roidt was the first to be held for six deer hunters shot and killed in northwestern Wisconsin last Sunday. Chai Yang, of St. Paul, Min., is accused of fatally shooting the hunters when they confronted him about trespassing on land owned by two of the victims.

AP

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Chief Justice Rehnquist absent: Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in October, will again not be present when the Supreme Court reconvenes to hear oral arguments on Monday, court officials said Friday. His absence will apparently continue for at least two more weeks.

Rehnquist missed arguments in the first two weeks of November, though he had initially said he could be on the bench during that time.

Friday's announcement was the latest indication that Rehnquist, 80, hasn't yet recovered sufficiently to take up the full range of his normal activities.

Colorado rock slide: Crews reopened a lane of traffic in each direction Friday on a major Colorado highway, a day after a rock slide sent boulders as big as vans crashing onto the road.

It could take months before the stretch of Interstate 70 is completely fixed, said Colorado Department of Transportation spokeswoman Stacy Stepien.

More than three dozen boulders landed on I-70 early Thursday, some embedded 6 feet deep. State officials closed a 2-mile section of the main east-west artery through Colorado, and rerouted Thanksgiving Day traffic along an almost 220-mile detour to the north.

Transportation officials estimated that there was \$1 million in damage.

Business

Halliburton investigation: A third or more of the government property Halliburton Co. was paid to manage for the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq could not be located by auditors, investigative reports to Congress show.

Halliburton's KBR subsidiary "did not effectively manage government property" and auditors could not locate hundreds of CPA items worth millions of dollars in Iraq and Kuwait this summer and fall, Inspector General Stuart W. Bowen reported to Congress in two reports.

Halliburton and the Pentagon deny wrongdoing, and say they are cooperating in all investigations.

World

Land mine conference: The United States will not attend a major review conference next week about a 1997 international treaty on land mines because of the cost of participation and disagreement with crucial elements of the pact.

In making the announcement Friday, the State Department said the decision should not be seen as a sign of U.S. indifference to the land-mine problem.

"We share common cause with all those who seek to protect innocent civilians from indiscriminately used land mines," State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said.

The conference, starting Monday in Nairobi, Kenya, will review compliance with the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines.

ASEAN finalizes China pact: Southeast Asian ministers Saturday finalized a free trade pact with China and a host of other accords to be adopted at a leaders summit, but touchy topics like the lack of democracy in Myanmar and Islamic unrest in Thailand were swept under the rug.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations meeting was a prelude to a two-day summit of the group's 10 leaders starting Monday. They also will meet with heads of governments from China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

The summit is the first such international



Turnpike strike: Union Pennsylvania Turnpike worker Lester Borrell pickets at the turnpike entrance in Mount Hope, Pa., Thursday. Turnpike managers began collecting tolls early Thanksgiving Day as the first strike in the turnpike's 64-year history entered its second day. Pennsylvania Turnpike officials have opted against waiving tolls Sunday as a way to cope with an ongoing strike sure to be made worse by heavy holiday travel. Tolls were waived Wednesday, the first day of the strike. Turnpike workers have been without a contract since September 2003. Union officials say the main reason for the strike is concern about job losses, although the two sides also are fighting over work benefits.

event for isolated, communist Laos.

CIA nuclear report: Pakistan on Saturday criticized a news report that said Iran's nuclear weapons program received more help from a renegade Pakistani scientist than previously disclosed.

The New York Times story was based on a new CIA report suggesting that Abdul Qadeer Khan — considered a national hero as the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb — provided more extensive help to Iran's atomic program in the 1990s than Washington has previously disclosed.

This week, the CIA posted on its Web site the unclassified version of the report to Congress detailing reported efforts by Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea and Syria to obtain chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons technology.

S. Korea nuclear dispute: South Korea welcomed a U.N. nuclear watchdog's decision not to refer its past illicit nuclear experiments to the U.N. Security Council, while North Korea condemned the U.N. agency's "double standards" on Saturday.

North Korea's state-run Central Radio, monitored by all-reps South Korean exhibit channel YTN, accused the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency of giving "tacit approval" to South Korea's nuclear ambitions.

On Friday, IAEA's board of governors criticized South Korea for conducting plutonium and uranium experiments in 1982 and 2000, but refrained from tougher options, including possible referral to the Security Council.

Palestinian security breakdown: A top Palestinian official said Saturday he would dismantle an elite security unit accused of abuse and corruption in a first step toward overhauling the tangled network of Palestinian security forces.

Palestinian Preventive Security chief Brig. Gen. Rashid Abu Shbak also announced plans to merge the ruling Fatah party's myriad militant groups to make them more accountable for their actions and to end the gun chaos on Palestinian streets.

The United States has long demanded a major overhaul of the Palestinian security services but faced stiff resistance from Yasser Arafat, who used the forces to maintain his hold on power.

Sri Lanka tightens security: Authorities bolstered security around the Sri Lankan capital Saturday ahead of a planned speech by the restrictive leader of the Tamil Tiger rebels.

It was unclear what Tiger chief Velupillai Prabhakaran's speech — to commemorate the rebels' "Martyrs' Day" — would touch upon, but he was expected to discuss the future course of stalled peace talks between his Liberation Tigers of Tamilleem and the Sri Lankan government.

The guerrillas celebrate Martyrs' Day on Nov. 27 each year to commemorate the deaths of thousands of rebel fighters since the insurgency began more than two decades ago. Past celebrations have been marred by attacks on military and economic targets.

U.N. sex abuse investigation: Sexual exploitation of women and girls by U.N. peacekeepers and bureaucrats in the U.N. mission in Congo "appears to be significant, wide-spread and ongoing," according to a confidential U.N. report that documents cases of pedophilia, prostitution and rape.

The report by a U.N. peacekeeping official who recently visited Congo says that some U.N. personnel paid \$1 to \$3, or bartered food or the promise of a job, for sex. In some cases, U.N. officials allegedly raped women and girls and then offered them food or money to make it look as if they had engaged in prostitution.

Senior U.N. officials in New York said they have received 150 allegations of sexual abuse by U.N. personnel in Congo.

N. Korea alleges psychological warfare:

North Korea on Saturday condemned news reports that portraits of totalitarian leader Kim Jong Il have been removed from public places, calling them "a foolish attempt to take the sun down from the sky."

North Korea's state-run news agency, KCNA, said the reports were spread as part of a "psychological warfare" by the United States and other "hostile forces" to undermine the communist regime.

North Korea warned that the psychological warfare will further hamper international efforts to resolve a dispute over its nuclear weapons programs.

"Any plot to defame our supreme leadership is nothing more than a foolish attempt to make the sun shine from the sky," KCNA said.

Stories and photo from wire services

U.S. troops in Europe to receive COLA hike

Next paycheck will reflect 31 percent increase to offset strong euro, British pound

BY TERRY BOYD

Stars and Stripes

U.S. troops living in Europe will see a 31 percent increase in their cost-of-living allowance in their next paycheck, as the Defense Department tries to provide relief from the dollar's slide against the euro and British pound.

For the November pay period, active-duty personnel will see "a substantial increase" in COLA, which was set Nov. 1, said Lt. Col. Stan Brown, deputy commander of the Heidelberg-based 266th Finance Command.

For example, a German-based sergeant, or enlisted pay grade E-5, with 10 years in two dependents, will see his or her COLA increase to \$785 from \$600.

That 31 percent increase will be reflected across all ranks, Brown said.

Brown and other U.S. Army Europe finance officers are launching a media campaign to make sure soldiers understand how cost-of-living adjustments, or COLAs, help compensate troops for living in an ever more expensive Europe.

The COLA increase is rare good financial news for Americans trying to get by in Europe on dollars, and USAREUR is using military print medium and American Forces Network to explain how COLA is calculated and what soldiers can expect in the future, Brown said.

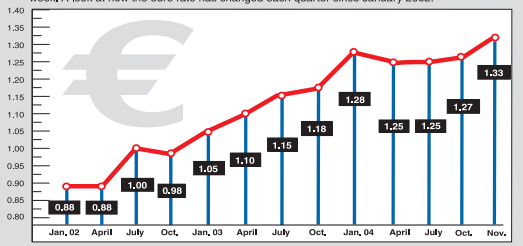
The military's core message is that over the long-term, currency indices and COLA "extra money meant to maintain soldiers' buying power commensurate with what they would have stateside — tend to track each other."

Yes, Brown said, in the short term, soldiers may see big fluctuations in the U.S. dollar's buying power.

But over time, cost-of-living adjustments will offset those changes, Brown said. "Over time, the COLA has kept pace ... the system is sound."

COLA changes

Troops living in Europe are seeing more money in their paychecks as the Defense Department increases its cost-of-living allowance. The COLA, as it is known, is indirectly tied to the euro, which has made big gains against the dollar in the last three years, hitting an all-time high of \$1.33 this week. A look at how the euro rate has changed each quarter since January 2002:



Source: 266th Finance Command, U.S. Army

Stars and Stripes

For 2003, COLA changed 14 times because of currency changes, and nine times in 2004, said Maj. Susan Walton, 266th deputy director, finance operations.

How low is the dollar?

Three years ago, it took as little as 88 cents to buy one euro.

On Friday, it briefly took about \$1.33 to buy one euro in some currency trading markets, a fifth straight day of record lows globally.

All in all, the dollar has lost about 38 percent of buying power for Americans in Europe in the last three years.

In real world terms, here's what it's come to: For the first time in its 49-year history, Oak Brook, Ill.-based McDonald's Corp. reported generating more revenue from European operations this year than from domestic burger-and-fries sales largely because of the super-sized pound and euro.

How much of the pain of the dollar's falling value can the Department of Defense alleviate for soldiers overseas when the dollar is so low?

A lot, once the COLA mechanism catches up, finance officials say.

With the COLA system, the difference between the dollar's diminishing value and the soldier's

real income — that is, the soldier's actual buying power — will even out over time, Brown said.

But there are a lot of moving parts, and they can't move in perfect unison with currency markets.

It takes time for the DOD and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service to chart currency movements, set the COLA, then distribute that money via payrolls, Walton and Brown said.

The Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee, which calculates COLAs, can't predict exactly how the dol-

lar's value will rise or fall — something that may vary greatly from the time the COLA amount is set and when DFAS actually distributes paychecks.

That means it will take a while for the COLA to catch up with the dollar's movement in value against other currencies.

But it also means the COLA remains on the paycheck for a period after the dollar has rebounded, Walton said.

"When (the dollar value) is decreasing, there's a lot of mumbering."

"But when people are still getting the overhang, they're very quiet."

Maj. Susan Walton
266th deputy director,
finance operations

determine each servicemembers' COLA such as where he or she is based under the four different categories for bases: full support areas with post exchange and

commissary; partial support; no support; and remote.

Those with no alternative to shopping on the economy receive larger COLAs when the dollar drops.

The DOD monitors prices off post through an annual retail prices schedule survey.

Prices are gathered by base support battalions and area support groups from Ramstein, Heidelberg, Gienkirchen, Vilseck and Schweinfurt then sent to the Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee.

The committee also uses this data in setting overseas housing allowances, per diem rates and other allowances.

Is the COLA crucial?

Yes and no, said 2nd Lt. Brandon McCarter, battalion medical officer for the 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Division in Baumholder, Germany.

The group of lieutenants he hangs out with generally shop on post, McCarter said.

It's not that shopping on the economy is too expensive.

Rather, it's often inconvenient for a range of reasons from the lack of merchants accepting credit cards to remembering to use value-added tax forms, he said.

When he does shop on the economy, McCarter added, he doesn't necessarily think in terms of dollars, but rather value in terms of German prices.

"So when I get those bills at the end of the month, there's a little bit of shock. The COLA helps offset that."

Where COLA and other adjustments do come in handy is for paying big living expenses including rent and utilities, said McCarter, who lives off base.

"It definitely helps out a lot," he said, adding that without the COLA, he might have to curtail his overseas lifestyle, including travel.

E-mail Terry Boyd at: boyd@mail.strips.osd.mil

Navy surveys newest sailors about training, experiences

BY SCOTT SCHONAUER

Stars and Stripes

NAVAL STATION ROTTA, Spain — The Navy wants its newest sailors to take an online survey that will help researchers determine why sailors decide to stay or leave the service.

A Navy memo released this month ordered commanding officers throughout the fleet to encourage enlisted personnel with more than one year but less than four years of service to complete the voluntary survey.

The survey is part of the First Watch Research Project and is being conducted by the Millington, Tenn.-based Navy Personnel Research, Studies and Technology Department.

Survey questions ask about such things as career progress, their experiences during training and how well the Navy prepared them for their job, said Rorie Harris, a department personnel research psychologist.

"More specific items ask about aspects of the Navy and how they influence decisions to stay or leave the Navy," Harris

said in an e-mail to Stars and Stripes.

"Other questions inquire about how they get along with their co-workers and what factors influence them to stay or get out of the Navy."

Although the Navy has reached retention goals the last several years, retaining "first-term" sailors has historically been an issue for the service.

Since April 2002, the Navy has surveyed recruits before they entered boot camp, during the last week of boot camp and during the last week in apprentice school.

The 15-minute online survey focuses on

sailors with at least a year in the Navy. The Web-based survey started Nov. 12 and will be available until Dec. 22.

Eligible sailors can access the questions at <http://fleetsurvey.nprst.navy.mil>.

Information from the survey will help researchers to evaluate training programs and pinpoint factors in retention and attrition.

The results will be available in early 2005 online at www.nprst.navy.mil, Harris said.

E-mail Scott Schonauer at: schonauers@mail.strips.osd.mil



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Above: Spc. Stanley Messer, left, and Staff Sgt. Rose Mikle walk through a shop-lined lane in Sarajevo's Turkish bazaar shopping district in April 1997. Left: Soldiers worked through the snow and high water in December 1995 to finish the bridge across the Sava River that linked Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and served as a main entry point for U.S. peacekeepers and their supplies. After nine years, the U.S. mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina is coming to a close this week.

Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Experts debate success of Bosnia mission

BY KENT HARRIS
Stars and Stripes

EAGLE BASE, Bosnia-Herzegovina — The CD shacks, hawkling assorted bootleg items, are scattered about. The haystacks — sometimes in fields, sometimes on horse-drawn carts and sometimes on horses' backs — dot the landscape. And the red signs with skulls and crossbones that warn of land mines aren't going anywhere soon.

But U.S. troops, who entered Bosnia in December 1995 for the start of what President Clinton said was a one-year mission, are in their final days in country. All but about 250 will be gone within the week.

Tens of thousands of American troops — the exact number might never be known — have spent time in Bosnia as part of Task Force Eagle during the last years of Bosnia. But to some, it's debatable how much the mission has accomplished.

"This has been a very long year," said Ted Carpenter, vice president of defense and foreign policy studies for the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington, D.C., with a hint of sarcasm.

"You could argue that the conflict hasn't restarted, so it's been a success," said David Chandler, author of "Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton." "But I think that's being a bit dishonest."

A better Bosnia?

Ask those who have been involved in the American mission, though, and one is likely to get a different answer.

"I dramatically disagree with anyone who says this mission has not been successful," said Gen. B.B. Bell, U.S. Army Europe commander. "Anyone who says there's not substantial progress was not here nine years ago."

Bell, who was assistant division commander of the 1st Infantry Division in 1995, watched as 1st Ar-

A time line of events

June 1991 — Slovenia and Croatia declare their independence from Yugoslavia. While Slovenia's exit is almost peaceful, a bloody war rages in Croatia.

Meanwhile, there's sporadic fighting between ethnic Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats in Bosnia. Each has a separate religion and historical claims to territory, however, populations have been somewhat mixed the regime of maverick communist strongman Josip Broz Tito.

■ **Fighting intensifies in Bosnia in 1992.** Thousands are killed. The Croats and Bosniaks, once allied, start fighting each other. By January, there's a three-way war.

In much of Europe and the States, the Serbs are mostly seen as aggressors. American air power comes into play to stop the shelling of Sarajevo and generally pressure the better-armed Serbs to stop fighting.

■ **November and December 1995** — Under heavy pressure from the United States and Europe, leaders from the ethnic factions are brought together. An agreement is reached in Dayton, Ohio, to stop the fighting.

more Division troops managed to bridge the storm-swollen Sava River so troops could cross into Bosnia.

Maj. Gen. William Nash commands the American contingent on its first mission, dubbed Implementation Force. The 1st AD controlled the sector north of Sarajevo to the Croatian border for a year. Then the mission changed names to Stabilization Force, or SFOR.

Nash, now retired from the military and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, visited the country last week to observe the end of the U.S. mission.

"I think by any measure you would choose to use, Bosnia is better than it was nine years ago," he said. "That's not to say that everything's perfect. But everything, I feel, is better."

The new commander of the sector, Finnish Brig. Gen. Juhana Kiliä, is one of Nash's battalion commanders in IFOR. He was as dis-

satisfied as his American counterparts. "The situation is totally different (today)," he said. "There have been an enormous amount of positive changes in the area."

Kiliä pointed to an improved infrastructure as one of the most obvious changes. Another is that people aren't openly attacking each other. According to most estimates, more than 200,000 people died in Bosnia as it attempted

Task Force Eagle, the American mission in Bosnia, is formed a few days later. The 1st Armored Division is ordered to Bosnia and takes over the U.S. part of the 60,000-strong Implementation Force.

■ **Dec. 20, 1996** — Not long after the 1st ID takes over the U.S. mission, IFOR ends. The Big Red One then takes over the U.S. role in the new Stabilization Force, or SFOR.

■ **October 1998** — The 1st Cavalry Division takes over command of a greatly reduced U.S. presence. About 7,000 American troops — about one-third of the original force, are now in Bosnia.

■ **March 2000** — The 49th Armored Division of the Texas National Guard takes over the mission. With the exception of the rotation led by the 3rd Infantry Division that followed, the remainder of the 15 SFOR rotations would be led by Army Reserve elements.

■ **Nov. 24, 2004** — Task Force Eagle is disestablished and most U.S. troops prepare to head home. ■ **Dec. 2, 2004** — SFOR will become EUFOR as the European Union takes control of peacekeeping operations in Bosnia from NATO.

Stars and Stripes

Internal woes

But some critics of international operations in Bosnia say American troops haven't helped solve anything.

"Generally, having troops on the ground has little to do with the real problems of Bosnia," Chandler said.

The largest problem, critics say, is the nature of country itself. The country's political, judicial and economic systems are still largely in shambles. The most recent estimate by the CIA suggests the country has a 40 percent unemployment rate. Corruption is rampant in many parts of the society, military officials say, and many residents don't trust the police or the court system.

A senior lecturer at Westminster University in England, Chandler says there's been no shortage of international organizations trying to help in the country. "Practically every international

group is playing a role in or interacting in Bosnian policies," he said. But he said few Bosnians have benefited from the programs and many are now worse off economically than they were before SFOR entered the country. And, at least partially because of international policies, few locals appear willing to put forth an effort to help the country improve.

"Few people in Bosnia have real positive feelings about the future," he said.

Bathsheba Crocker, co-director of the Post Conflict Research Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the indicators aren't favorable for any economic or political turnaround soon.

"Voter turnout continues to decrease every time elections are held," she said, adding that international businesses won't invest until they have confidence in the local legal and political systems. "It's difficult to see how democracy is really working."

Mladen Pupovac, a Croat national now living in the United Kingdom, like his Bosnian neighbors to the south, lived under the "benevolent dictatorship" of long-time communist leader Josip Broz Tito.

He said Tito remained in power over a disparate group of people because he suppressed any nationalistic thoughts other than those to the greater state of Yugoslavia.

Pupovac said he is more skeptical than others about the long-range prospects for peace in Bosnia. While fighting isn't likely to erupt anytime soon, he said, it will come again if the international community can't figure out ways to improve the daily lives of Bosnians and get them to trust and work with each other. "I think the fighting could erupt again and I think it would be even more vicious than between '92 and '95," he said.

E-mail Kent Harris at harris@small.ustrips.com

“I dramatically disagree with anyone who says this mission has not been successful.”

Gen. B.B. Bell

U.S. Army Europe commander

to break away during the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

"We had not witnessed that level of atrocities in Europe since World War II," Bell said. "It takes time to heal those wounds."

And the American contingent of SFOR helped provide that time, he said.

Good Cheer gives single GIs a home for holidays

Program pairs soldiers with German families for Christmas

BY RICK EMERT

Stars and Stripes

BAMBERG, Germany — The 279th Base Support Battalion and the Bamberg German-American Men's Club are playing matchmaker this holiday season.

With the Christmas Good Cheer Program, single soldiers from Warner Barracks can get out of their not-so-festive barracks and spend the holiday with a local German family.

"The holiday season is a special season," said Sybille Schmitt, who runs the program for the 279th BSB. "Soldiers may feel lonely being in a foreign country at this time. We have this program so that soldiers won't feel left out over the holidays."

The program started in Bamberg 20 years ago. Schmitt has headed it up for 17 years.

The program usually links up 30 to 40 soldiers with German families. Last year, only 10 soldiers signed up because 1st Armored Division units were de-

ployed to Iraq and the 1st Infantry Division was on block leave before deploying.

"There were not many soldiers around to sign up last year," said Helmut Funke, vice president of Bamberg's German-American Men's Club. "This year, we will beat the drums even louder. We want to reach the soldiers who will be alone for the holidays and who may be under even more stress from the war."

Although no soldiers had signed up for the program as of Friday morning, Schmitt said representatives from the 54th Engineer Battalion and 7th Corps Support Group had several soldiers interested in participating.

Soldiers who sign up for the program fill out an application that lists their age, hobbies, interests and where they are from in the States. Schmitt and Funke then try to pair soldiers and families whose interests appear to match best.

"If we have a family that went to the States and visited Wisconsin,

for example, we try to match them up with a soldier from Wisconsin," Schmitt said. "That way they have something to talk about."

And talking won't be a problem.

"There is no language barrier," Schmitt said. "When we advertise in the German newspapers, we request that at least one person in the family is able to speak English."

The program bolsters German-American relations, which Funke said have been strong in Bamberg for many years.

"For the families, this is an opportunity to strengthen the ties between Germans and Americans and share their traditions," Funke said. "The soldiers are living in Bamberg, and we want to make them feel at home."

"This is a kind of Christmas present to our guests."

For more information about the program, call DSN 469-1600 or civilian 0951-300-1600.

E-mail Rick Emert at: emert@mail.stripes.osd.mil

Heidelberg civilian wins excellence award

A Heidelberg-based civilian took top honors at an awards ceremony recognizing employee excellence at the Army's Installation Management Agency.

Michael Damico, food program manager for the agency's European headquarters, was given the Stalwart Award for 2004. The agency named him top employee among those serving in staff offices in its seven regions and headquarters.

Damico founded a development program with quarterly video-conference training for all food service personnel in Europe. His price negotiations with commercial vendors also have saved the government many on bulk items, according to an Army news release.

Each region nominates one employee from its headquarters and three from the field. The ceremony took place Nov. 17 at Fort Bliss, Texas.

France honors USAF's Lichte

The U.S. Air Forces in Europe's second in command received one of the French government's highest honors, the National Order of Merit, in a ceremony last week at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

The USAF vice commander, Lt. Gen. Arthur J. Lichte, accepted the award Tuesday for distinguished service from the French air force chief of staff, Gen. Richard Wolsztynski, according to a USAF news release.

The USAF vice commander's responsibilities include negotiations with foreign officials, and Wolsztynski lauded Lichte's promotion of positive U.S.-French relations, the release said.

Lichte has been USAF vice commander since December of 2002, after serving as the director of plans and programs for Air Mobility Command headquarters at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

He is the USAF vice commander to receive the honor, according to the USAF release.

New social service moves to Seneca Army Depot

ROMULUS, N.Y. — Efforts to redevelop the old Seneca Army Depot in the Finger Lakes region took a knock last month when KidsPeace said it was shutting down a 4-year-old treatment center for troubled youths.

But a social service agency in Rochester is already filling the gap. Hillside Children's Center said last week it will move about 120 children next month into a \$10 million center that KidsPeace, a Pennsylvania-based nonprofit group, built in 2000. Most of the 360 KidsPeace employees look likely to be rehired by Hillside, officials said.

In the 1940s, the 10,000-acre depot was home to the nation's largest Army stockpile of nuclear missiles. The military, which employed close to 1,500 people at the depot up until 1993, exited in 2000.

From The Associated Press

Clip & save

Christmas with the KRANKS

Show dates are approximate. Check your local theater or aafes.com for exact show dates and times.

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Adana | 21-27 Jan |
| Arvano | 14-20 Jan |
| Bahenhausen | 14-20 Jan |
| Bahad | 10-16 Dec |
| Bamberg | 17-23 Dec |
| Baumholder | 31 Dec, 4-6 Jan |
| Bitburg | 14-20 Jan |
| Camp Doha | 31 Dec, 4-6 Jan |
| Darmstadt | 7-13 Jan |
| Dexheim | 24-30 Dec |
| Friedberg | 21-27 Jan |
| Giebelstadt | 7-13 Jan |
| Grafenwehr | 17-23 Dec |
| Hannau | 10-16 Dec |
| Heidelberg | 17-23 Dec |
| Holtenfels | 24-30 Dec |
| Ilshheim | 7-13 Jan |
| Katterbach | 31 Dec, 4-6 Jan |
| Killingen | 31 Dec, 4-6 Jan |
| Kosovo | 21-27 Jan |
| Lakenheath | 17-23 Dec |
| Manheim | 10-16 Dec |
| Mildenhall | 10-16 Dec |
| Ramstein | 24-30 Dec |
| Ramstein Nightgale | 17-23 Dec |
| Rhein Main | 31 Dec, 4-6 Jan |
| Schwinfurt | 24-30 Dec |
| Spangdahlem | 7-13 Jan |
| Tafel | 4-10 Feb |
| Vaihingen | 24-30 Dec |
| Wiesbaden | 21-27 Jan |
| Vilseck | 10-16 Dec |
| Vogelweh | 10-16 Dec |
| Wiesbaden | 17-23 Dec |
| Wuerzburg | 10-16 Dec |

Coming to your FIRSTRUN Theater!

NO! HO! HO!

Christmas with the KRANKS

Based on the bestselling novel "SKIPPING CHRISTMAS" by John Grisham

THANKSGIVING

Based on John Grisham's best-selling novel "Skipping Christmas," Lufkin Kranks is a man who decides to skip Christmas and all of its trappings and go on a vacation with his wife, Nora. Instead, But when his daughter decides at the last minute to come home for the holidays, he is forced to put Christmas and the yuletide festivities back together.

PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED

clim & save

ALEXANDER

Fortune favors the bold

Show dates are approximate. Check your local theater or aafes.com for exact show dates and times.

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| Darmstadt | 7-13 Jan |
| Dexheim | 24-30 Dec |
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| Heidelberg | 17-23 Dec |
| Holtenfels | 24-30 Dec |
| Ilshheim | 7-13 Jan |
| Katterbach | 31 Dec, 4-6 Jan |
| Killingen | 31 Dec, 4-6 Jan |
| Kosovo | 21-27 Jan |
| Lakenheath | 17-23 Dec |
| Manheim | 10-16 Dec |
| Mildenhall | 10-16 Dec |
| Ramstein | 24-30 Dec |
| Ramstein Nightgale | 17-23 Dec |
| Rhein Main | 31 Dec, 4-6 Jan |
| Schwinfurt | 24-30 Dec |
| Spangdahlem | 7-13 Jan |
| Tafel | 4-10 Feb |
| Vaihingen | 24-30 Dec |
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Iraqi government says it won't postpone vote

Spokesman: Jan. 30 date still in effect

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The Iraqi government Saturday brushed aside Sunni Muslim demands to delay the Jan. 30 election, and a spokesman of the majority Shiite community called the date "nonnegotiable."

Insurgents stepped up attacks, blasting U.S. patrols in Baghdad and killing a U.S. soldier north of the capital.

Clashes also occurred north of Baghdad, where U.S. and Iraqi forces fought a three-hour gunbattle with insurgents who overran a town hall and two police stations, local officials said.

Talk of delaying the election gained momentum after insurgents urged the government to postpone the voting for six months to give authorities time to secure polling stations and to convince Sunni clerics to abandon their call for an electoral boycott.

But the spokesman for interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, a secular Shiite, told reporters Saturday that the government was sticking by the Jan. 30 date after receiving assurances from the Iraqi Electoral Commission that an election could take place even if Sunni areas wracked by insurgency.

"The Iraqi government is determined ... to hold elections on time," spokesman Thair al-Naqeeb said. "The Iraqi government, led by the prime minister, is calling on all aspects of the Iraqi people to participate in the elections and to contribute in the elections to build a strong democratic country."

That position was strongly endorsed Saturday by politicians and clerics from the Shiite community, which comprises about 60 percent of Iraq's nearly 26 million people and which has been long clamoring for an election.



A hooded Iraqi policeman in Baghdad on Saturday reads a poster with a "fatwa," or religious ruling, issued by Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, encouraging people to vote in Iraq's upcoming elections.

In the Shiite holy city of Najaf, Mohammed Hussein al-Hakim, son of Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Said al-Hakim, told reporters that the Shiite leadership would not accept a delay and called this position "nonnegotiable."

He said elections were "the most legitimate way on the international level to express the will of the people" and that "all parties have agreed on this date and we cannot take back this position for any reason."

In Baghdad, a major Shiite party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Republic in Iraq or SCIRI, said that 42 parties and individuals from the Shiite and Turkmen communities had agreed on a statement affirming support for the Jan. 30 date.

SCIRI official Redha Jawad

Taqi said the 42 included the Islamic Dawa, the other leading Shiite party, and the Iraqi National Congress of Ahmad Chalabi, whose spokesman Entifaah Qanbar had already criticized the postponement call.

In other developments, an American soldier from the 1st Infantry Division was killed Saturday when a roadside bomb exploded near a U.S. patrol about 40 miles north of Baghdad, the military said.

Two U.S. military vehicles, including an armored shuttle bus, were damaged by a bomb Saturday on the road to Baghdad International Airport, which the State Department considers one of the most dangerous routes in the country. An al-Qaida-affiliated group claimed responsibility for the attack.

Three civilians died and a dozen were injured Saturday in other bomb attacks against U.S. convoys in the Baghdad area, U.S. and Iraqi officials said.

About 100 insurgents overran the city hall and two police stations in Khaldi, 40 miles north of the capital but were driven off by American and Iraqi forces after a three-hour gunbattle, municipal official Said Ahmed Abbas said. Al-Jazeera television said three Iraqi security guards were killed.

South of the capital, U.S., British and Iraqi security forces continued operations against suspected insurgent strongholds near the towns of Latifiyah and Mahmoudiya. A U.S. military spokesman said Saturday a total of 126 suspected insurgents have been arrested since the operation began Tuesday.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Friday, at least 1,233 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 961 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The Defense Department did not provide an update Friday.

The British military has reported 74 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia have reported one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,095 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 852 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ Two Marines were killed while conducting house-to-house searches in Faluja, Iraq.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Marine Sgt. Nick Nolte, 25, Falls City, Neb.; died Wednesday of wounds suffered Nov. 8 when an explosive detonated near his vehicle near Baghdad, assigned to the 2nd Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, N.C.

Iraq briefs Iran on security, requests aid against insurgents at border

BY ALI AKBAR DAREINI

The Associated Press



Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, right, greets Iraqi Vice President Ibrahim al-Jaafari on Saturday at the start of their official meeting in Tehran, Iran.

TEHRAN, Iran — An Iraqi vice president briefed neighboring Iran on his country's ongoing insurgency Saturday, demanding the Tehran government's assistance in curbing the infiltration of terrorists into Iraq, his adviser said.

Vice President Ibrahim al-Jaafari met Iranian President Mohammad Khatami just days before Iran hosts interior ministers of Iraq's neighboring states, plus Egypt, for a regional conference.

"Al-Jaafari presented President Khatami with a detailed report about security problems in Iraq and briefed him on how insurgents, after the Fallujah fighting, were changing their tactics from a military phase into a political agenda to undermine the upcoming elections," Javad Taleb, an adviser to al-Jaafari, told The Associated Press.

Taleb quoted al-Jaafari as telling Khatami

that Iraq wanted the Tehran conference of ministers to help stem the insurgency to allow for peaceful staging of the first post-Saddam democratic elections.

"Iraq needs the security help of its neighbors and it hopes neighbors, during the Tehran conference, give adequate promises to curb any infiltration through their borders into Iraq," Taleb quoted al-Jaafari as telling Khatami.

Washington has accused Tehran of interfering in Iraq and sending money and infiltrators to foment the insurgency there. Iran has criticized the U.S.-led campaign against insurgents.

Iran has denied the charges, but said it did not rule out the possibility that some infiltrators might have crossed its border illegally.

A spokesman for Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi has downplayed the likelihood of delaying the Jan. 30 elections, despite calls by Sunni Muslim politicians and a number of political parties to postpone the vote because of security concerns.

Khatami, according to state-run radio, also believes the Iraq elections should be held on time.

The two-day meeting of interior ministers from Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria begins Tuesday.

The ministers are expected to be accompanied by senior security officials, who can share intelligence on militants and other people suspected of being linked to the insurgency in Iraq.

"It is hoped that the Tehran meeting will produce practical results in halting terrorist infiltrations into Iraq, and also assist in locating terrorist groups operating from within other countries in the region, potentially freezing their funding," a Friday statement from the Iraqi Interior Ministry said.

Analysts say Iran hopes its hosting of the meeting will send a signal, particularly to the United States, that it recognizes the threat al-Qaida poses both to Iraq and to itself.

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MIDEAST NOTEBOOK

Stars and Stripes

Troops mark holiday with fitness, feasting



NANCY MCILLMAN/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Sgt. Dale Fontenelle, a soldier with 283rd Transportation Company, holds a pose during Forward Operating Base Speicher's first body-building competition held on Oct. 30. Fontenelle went on to win first place in the class of those under 5-feet-7.

Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq, got a little "flex time" recently at the base's first body-building competition.

Organized by Sgt. 1st Class Woody B. Carter of the 67th Combat Support Hospital, the event drew 15 male and female body builders and more than 350 spectators, according to a U.S. Army news release.

A five-member panel judged participants on overall body symmetry, confidence in posing, endurance and attitude. Winners of each class were awarded Army and Air Force Exchange Services gift certificates, a trophy, protein supplements and a subscription to Muscle Fitness magazine.

Burger King in Kandahar

U.S. and coalition troops in Afghanistan got another taste of home recently when the Army and Air Force Exchange Service opened a Burger King at the Kandahar Airfield.

The new fast-food outlet fired up its grills for the first time last month, drawing throngs of whopper-seekers to its south-eastern Afghanistan location, according to a U.S. Army news release. It is the second Burger King opened by AAFES in Afghanistan.

The other is at Bagram Air Base, near Kabul.

Run, then eat

Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Palwoda in Balad, Iraq, decided to burn off a few calories before eating their Thanksgiving meal this year.

The troops started their holiday with a 1.5-mile run, dubbed the "turkey trot." The race, run in full body armor, was won by Maj. Kirby Hanson, Task Force 1st Battalion, 7th Armor Regiment's executive officer, according to a U.S. Army news release.

"It was a good run," said Maj. David Hubner, commander of Task Force 1-77. "I think wearing the body armor made it a lot more fun."

After the run, Brig. Gen. John G. Morgan, 1st Infantry Division assistant division commander for maneuver visited the base to thank the soldiers.

When it came time to eat, Maj. Hubner and Col. Randall Dragon, 2nd Brigade Combat Team Commander helped the cooks serve the Thanksgiving meal.

"It was our way of thanking the soldiers for all they do for their leadership and their country every day," Hubner said.



JOE ALGEIER/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Palwoda, Balad, Iraq, take part in a 1.5-mile "turkey trot" on Thursday. The soldiers of Task Force 1-77 start down for a Thanksgiving feast after their morning run.

More aggressive Iraq offensives generating a surge of detainees

Influx tests new procedures adopted after Abu Ghraib prison scandal

BY BRADLEY GRAHAM

The Washington Post

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq—More aggressive U.S. military operations in Iraq over the past two months have generated a surge in detainees, nearly doubling the number held by U.S. forces to about 8,300, according to the U.S. general in charge of detention operations.

Since early October, the number of detainees in U.S. custody has grown by about 4,000 as a result of assaults on insurgents in Samarra, Fallujah, Mosul, north Babil province and elsewhere, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller said Friday. With additional U.S. raids being planned as part of a stepped-up effort to crush the insurgency ahead of national elections in January, the number of detainees is expected to continue to grow in coming weeks.

The large influx of prisoners is putting stress on U.S. detention operations, providing the biggest test yet of new facilities and procedures adopted in the wake of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal this past spring. Miller and other officers said in interviews here. So far, the flow has been manageable, they said, but many detainees have not yet made it through the system.

The mistreatment of Iraqi detainees by U.S. soldiers at this facility last autumn was documented in photographs and videos that shocked the world when they surfaced in the spring and prompted

a series of investigations. While about 50 military police, intelligence, medical and civilian contract personnel were eventually implicated, investigators also blamed senior leadership for failing to provide clear guidance or exercise adequate oversight.

U.S. commanders responded to the scandal by implementing new controls over military police and intelligence operations and by bringing in Army corrections specialists to advise and help run

4,600 are at Camp Bucca, a U.S. detention facility in southern Iraq that held 2,500 two months ago.

The total here at Abu Ghraib is about 2,000, and about 1,700 remain in the custody of field commanders, whose troops are conducting initial screening interviews.

Miller said recent interrogations have yielded some "high-value information" about insurgents' hiding places, movements and methods.

Detainees of particular interest to military intelligence are kept at Abu Ghraib. Many of the rest are sent to Camp Bucca. At Abu Ghraib, the pace of interrogations has picked up, from 180 a week to 200.

"The troops have been working around the clock, but we've been able to manage the influx," said Cohen Blum, who has been at the Joint Interrogation Debriefing Center here.

To prepare for more detainees, new wooden facilities are being constructed at Camp Bucca that will expand capacity to 6,000 by January, Miller said.

Allegations of abuse against detainees are down about 60 percent from what they were in May and average about 10 a month, Miller said.

Only two or three a month tend to be substantiated, the general said.

"These are not intentional. These are overly aggressive kinds of things, like combat take-downs," Miller said.

"The troops have been working around the clock, but we've been able to manage the influx."

Col. Ron Black

Joint Interrogation Debriefing Center

the facility.

The prison building that was the site of abuses by American guards has been turned over to Iraqi authorities and is used to jail criminals. Detainees in U.S. military custody are kept in recently constructed camps with climate-controlled tents and such amenities as movies and a library.

Miller, who has been supervising detention operations since April, said many of the changes, including a computerized record-keeping system, have enabled guards and interrogators to operate more efficiently. Also helpful is the experience soldiers have gained since taking control at the start of the year from the units involved in the scandal.

Of the 8,300 detainees, about

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U.S. troops face combat on a wing and a prayer

Many find faith while facing death in battle

BY STEVE LIEWER

Stars and Stripes

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MACKENZIE, Iraq — When the back end of Spc. Derrick Lawson's Bradley fighting vehicle jumped from the force of the explosion, he thought of one thing to do.

"I saw the smoke and the flames, and I knew we'd been hit," said Lawson, 21, of the 1st Infantry Division's 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment. "My first reaction was to start praying."

The Bradley lurched to a halt, its driver already dead. Amid the screaming, shouting, confusion and thickening smoke, Lawson saw his platoon sergeant, Staff Sgt. Metcovey Jordan, struggling with the jammed rear hatch. He closed his eyes and desperately said a second prayer.

Someone answered.

"Then I looked up, and the door was open," Lawson said, 3½ months after the July 21 attack. "I just jumped out and ran down the street."

Walking daily through the valley of the shadow of death has not necessarily produced a lot of road-to-Damascus religious conversions among combat troops,

chaplains, say. But it has pushed some back toward the religion of their youth.

"Every individual fortifies themselves in different ways," said Capt. Gary Fisher, 39, of Alexandria, La., the 1-4 Cavalry's chaplain. "A lot of life's questions are being asked and answered."

Lawson spent some time in the hospital recovering from smoke inhalation and burns before returning to duty. He's had a lot of time to reflect. He attended church with his family growing up in Spring Lake, N.C., but God has taken a more central place in his life now.

"It was a wake-up call. You can go at any time," Lawson said. "I'm in an environment where, every day, people are out there trying to kill me. (Now) I do things differently. I try to be a better person."

Sgt. Orville Whitlock, 30, of Lynchburg, Va., is squad leader for a 9th Engineer Battalion platoon attached to the 1-4 Cavalry. On May 5, someone fired a rocket-propelled grenade at his Humvee. Shrapnel injured Whitlock and the four other soldiers inside, but no one died.

"I'm thankful to God that nothing worse happened than that,"

Whitlock said. "Before I go out the gate, I say a silent prayer that we get through everything we experience."

"I pray more in Iraq than I have in years," said Capt. John Trylich, 30, of Los Angeles, commander of the 1-4 Cavalry's Troop B "Buildings."

Spc. Steve Wetmore, 20, of Union City, Pa., serves in Whitlock's engineer platoon. He said he doesn't go to church, but he does believe in God.

To hedge his bets, he wears a cross on his dog tags.

Under fire, Wetmore said, he thinks about his job more than religion. Two weeks ago, he was manning a traffic checkpoint when rebels fired mortar rounds directly at their position.

"When we got mortared the other day," he said. "The last thing I was thinking about was praying."

Spc. Jose Bartual, 26, of New York City, said he is a nonpracticing Roman Catholic, but he comes from a religious family. He's been in several intense firefights and survived the explosion of a bomb underneath his armored personnel carrier.

"My 8-year-old niece won't let a day go by that she isn't praying for me," Bartual said. In fact, the



Spc. Steve Wetmore



Pfc. Joshua Schmidt



Spc. Jose Bartual



Capt. John Trylich

girl worried so much that after his midtourney leave her family told her he wasn't returning to Iraq.

Sgts. Eduardo Colon and Carlos Torres both are 25 and both grew up in Puerto Rico. Now they both serve with Trylich in the 1-4 Cavalry's B Troop, based in Schweinfurt, Germany.

Together they've dodged bullets and survived roadside bombs. They also share a fatalistic philosophy about life and death and combat.

"I believe," Torres said, "if it's your time, it's your time."

"I pray to God and whatnot, but

I don't go to church," Colon said. "But when I get back, I'm going to start."

Pfc. Joshua Schmidt, 21, of Sacramento, Calif., arrived in Iraq last spring without religion. But after surviving a mine strike, an RPG attack, and several gun battles, he's beginning to wonder.

"I was agnostic when I first came down here," said Schmidt, of the 9th Engineers. "I'd still say I'm agnostic, but I definitely believe he's out there."

"I'm either damn lucky," he added, "or somebody's looking out for me."

E-mail Steve Liewer at: liewers@mail.esr.pentagon.mil



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After takeover, Marines mull Fallujah's future

BY KATARINA KRAJČOVAC

The Associated Press

FALLUJAH, Iraq — At first glance, the U.S. Marines saw nothing extraordinary about a baby crib in the corner of a bombed-out house in Fallujah. But when Lance Cpl. Nick Fenezia threw back the blankets, a Kalashnikov rifle and bullet-proof vest lay on the tiny mattress.

"Man, did you have to be just another mummy?" Fenezia mused of the baby's missing father, employing American shorthand for Iraq's insurgents — mujahideen — or Muslim holy warriors. "Couldn't you have stopped shooting at us and watched your baby grow instead?"

U.S. and Iraqi forces continue to fight sporadic gunbattles with rebel holdouts as they clear Fallujah of weapons. On Friday, Lt. Gen. John F. Stettler, commanding general of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, said only about half the buildings in the city had been cleared even though organized resistance has collapsed.

But as the battle calms, U.S. forces are reflecting on the fight, their often-unseen foes and the future of a city that lies in ruins.

Fenezia, of Red Bank, N.J., also turned up a bayonet, ammunition and a baby photo — all lying amid walls shattered by the Americans' devastating firepower.

A burst of gunfire rattled nearby in southern Fallujah, but the Marines shrugged it off.

"They have no idea what they are shooting at. It's just mental games they play. They know they've lost and there is no way out," says Lance Cpl. Brian Weyer, 21, of Chouteau, Okla. "This is nothing, not after the intense battle here."



An Iraqi Red Crescent worker looks at a deserted and devastated street in Fallujah, Iraq, on Friday. U.S. and Iraqi forces continue to fight sporadic gunbattles with rebel holdouts as they clear Fallujah of weapons. But as the battle calms, U.S. forces are reflecting on the fight, their often-unseen foes and the future of a city which lies in ruins.

Marine, Army and Iraqi troops opened their Fallujah assault Nov. 8 with massive artillery and airstrikes pounding the city before tanks, armored vehicles and troops on foot pushed in from the north.

They battled for days with rebels who had been fortifying the city since April, when planners called off a Marine assault amid widespread outcry over reports of civilian casualties emanating from Fallujah's hospital, numbers U.S. officers called inflated.

The U.S. military says upward of 1,200 insurgents died in the latest offensive.

More than 1,000 suspects were captured, and more than 50 U.S. forces along with eight Iraqis were killed.

Marines are now clearing weapons from the city on the banks of the Euphrates River and preparing for the return of civil-

ians, who once numbered up to 300,000 by some tallies, though U.S. officers estimated that only 50,000 to 60,000 were in the city before the well-publicized attack.

As the fight dies down, Marines are finally finding free time to reflect on the furious battle. The Americans wonder how Fallujah could have devolved into what officers say was a center from which rebels spread bombings, beheadings and attacks across Iraq.

Cpl. Perry Bessant, 21, says Marines are "like a detective agency, coming to investigate, to put the pieces together of what Fallujah was."

"It was a space for so many foreign fighters. I just can't believe the locals tolerated them," adds Bessant, from Mullins, S.C.

"Maybe they were terrified of them. Maybe I'd feel like that too if someone said they'd kill my family," replies Staff Sgt. Alexandros Pashos, 38, from New York City.

New York, New Jersey, South Carolina, Oklahoma: The Marines' homes are all a far piece from this central Iraq city in the middle of dusty plain, once dominated by Muslim men in red-checked scarves and black masks who try to kill the American "infidel" invaders.

When Fallujans do return en masse, they will find many parts of their city in ruins, with bank buildings scorched, mosques bombed, shops destroyed, cars burned, doors to their homes forced open and their cupboards and drawers rifled by foreigners.

"It's going to be difficult putting Fallujah together again, but not impossible," said Pashos. "That is the saddest, to have it all come to this, all these people's homes destroyed."

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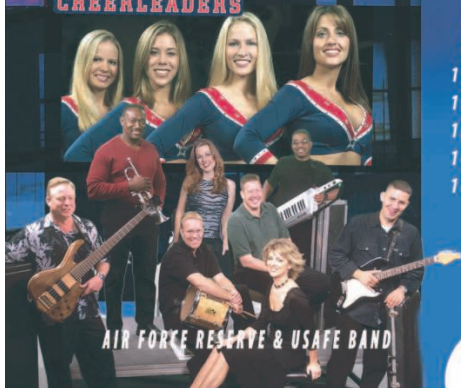
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Commercial pilots fly the unfriendly skies

Military air traffic, threat of attacks keep pilots focused

BY SLOBODAN LEKIC
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — "Traffic! Traffic!" blares the cockpit's automated collision warning system just as the pilots of Royal Jordanian Flight 814 pull their airliner from its steep corkscrew descent and begin the final approach to Baghdad International Airport.

Two U.S. Army helicopters taking off from the airport have crossed into the path of the passenger jet.

The crew banks sharply to the left, avoids the choppers and then levels off the 100-seat Fokker F-28 airliner as it settles onto the runway.

"One thing you can say about these flights is that they're not dull," says Robert Brand, the South African pilot.

"They're never uneventful. There's always something there to challenge your flying skills."

Royal Jordanian Airlines and Iraq's newly reconstituted flag carrier, Iraqi Airways, operate the only scheduled commercial service from and to Baghdad.



Robert Brand, a South African pilot on Royal Jordanian Flight 814 finishes a "corkscrew" descent to evade would-be attackers above the terminal at Baghdad International Airport on Friday. Royal Jordanian Airlines and Iraqi Airways, operate the only scheduled commercial service between Amman, Jordan, and Baghdad.

The one-hour flights to and from Amman, Jordan, are used by foreign contractors, journalists, Iraqi civilians and others eager to avoid the highly dangerous drive along the desert highway linking the two capitals.

"We decided to fly because they said the road is not so safe,"

says Doha Rouhi, an interior decorator from Baghdad returning on Flight 814 from a visit to Amman.

Although there have been no major incidents since U.S. authorities allowed resumption of civilian flights last year, the crews flying the route say they frequently have to dodge military traffic near the airport.

"When military operations are going on, they'll just close the airport to civilian traffic for days, but even when they're not, you always have to watch the Americans," says Brand, who hails from South Africa's capital, Pretoria.

Brand works for Pretoria-based Air Quarius Aviation, a charter operator that provides planes and crews for numerous airlines in East Africa and the Middle East, including Royal Jordanian.

The company uses F-28 twin jets — white with no company logo — that are particularly well-suited to the evasive maneuvers required for flying in and out of Baghdad's airport, where pilots constantly worry about the possibility of ground fire by insurgents.

Last year, a civilian cargo jet was hit after takeoff with a shoulder-launched missile, and earlier this year a burst of automatic gunfire killed a passenger aboard an Australian C-130 Hercules transport plane.

More recently, a bomb was found in the baggage of a passenger leaving Baghdad, prompting a warning from the U.S. Embassy about the dangers of using the flights.

To lessen the threat of being shot at, pilots have adopted a

"nonstandard approach" for landings: They arrive at 15,000 feet and then descend sharply in a stomach-churning series of tight, spiraling turns that pin passengers deep in their seats.

The Fokker's clamshell airbrakes at the back of the fuselage keep airspeed from rising uncontrollably during the dive.

After landing, crew perform a quick walkaround to check fuselage and wings for bullet holes.

"We try to keep above the confines of the airport at all times when we're taking off or landing," Brand says during the landing.

As he speaks, a heavily laden Antonov AN-12 cargo plane climbs steeply past the descending Fokker, black smoke streaming from its four turboprop engines.

Baghdad's airport — once known as Saddam International Airport — has been closed to non-military flights on several occasions in recent weeks.

During the attack on the rebel stronghold of Fallujah, U.S. forces banned civilian flights to Baghdad for seven days, giving the idled South African crews a chance to visit some of Jordan's main tourist attractions.

"We visited Petra, the Dead Sea and Aqaba," says the Flight 814's senior flight attendant, Salemina Mohlono.

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IN THE WORLD

Ukraine's parliament calls election invalid

The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukraine's parliament on Saturday declared the country's disputed presidential election invalid in a symbolic vote after a week of growing street protests and allegations of vote fraud.

The action — approved by 255 of the 429 legislators present — was not legally binding, but it was a clear demonstration of rising dissatisfaction.

The legislators also passed a vote of no-confidence in the Central Elections Commission.

The commission has said Russian-backed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich won the Nov. 21 presidential election, but supporters of his Western-leaning opponent Viktor Yushchenko have streamed into the streets, claiming he was cheated out of victory.

The no-confidence vote also was nonbinding but increases pressure on Yanukovich and his camp. Negotiators from both camps were expected to meet for talks Saturday as part of a working-part established by President Leonid Kuchma in consultation with European Union on Friday. Ukraine's parliament has no legal capacity to directly affect the election results.

But speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn said, "The most realistic political decision, taking into account the mutual claims of massive violations, is to pronounce the elections invalid."

"The Central Election Commission discredited itself in the first round, undermining public trust in the institution as it is," Lytvyn said.

Outside the parliament building, more than 7,000 opposition protesters encircled the building, chanting "Yushchenko!" Police stood near the building's entrances and watched.

Kuchma, the outgoing president, announced establishment of the working group Friday after a meeting he led with the two rivals and the delegation of European envoys. Prospects for a resolution of the crisis by the group, made up of four people from each campaign, appeared slim.

Yushchenko told a cheering crowd that he was insisting on a new election and he would give the talks with his rival two days at most to yield results. Yanukovich aide Stepan Havrysh, who was to participate on behalf of the prime minister, said he thought it might be possible to reach an agreement within two days.

"Kuchma and Yanukovich want to drag out time," said Ivan Plyushch, one of four Yushchenko supporters who were to participate in the working group, told The Associated Press.

"But if in the next two days the situation doesn't develop, we'll return to active measures," Plyushch refused to elaborate.

Havrysh said the prime minister's team would make no further comments until the working group had reached a decision.

Yushchenko told his supporters that he would insist on a re-

peated election Dec. 12.

He also demanded that the membership of the Central Election Commission be changed, absentee balloting be prohibited, the candidates be given equal access to the media and that international observers participate.

The Union news agency quoted Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Yakovenko as saying Friday that Moscow regarded a potential revote favorably — an apparent significant retreat from its earlier insistence that the elections were fair and valid.

Yanukovich's Party of Regions scheduled an urgent session in the eastern city of Luhansk for Sunday to discuss autonomy, lawmakers Anatoliy Blyzniuk told protesters gathered there.

"Some 15 million people have said: Yanukovich is our president," he said. "It is not just that (Luhansk) region, it is the entire southeast of the country that wants that (autonomy) option."

It was from Ukraine's pro-Russian, heavily industrialized eastern half that Yanukovich drew his support.



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EU, Iran squabbling over exempting nuke equipment

BY GEORGE JAHN
The Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — Top European and Iranian officials sought Saturday to save a deal committing Tehran to freeze nuclear programs that can make weapons. But Iran's insistence on exempting key equipment dampened hopes of an agreement before a key U.N. meeting reconvenes this week.

The squabble over Iran's interpretation of its deal with the European Union to freeze all activities linked to uranium enrichment stalled an International Atomic Energy Agency board meeting, which was adjourned Friday until Monday.

That was meant to give time for the Iranian government to approve a total freeze of the program — which can produce both low-grade nuclear fuel and weapons-grade material for the core of nuclear warheads — and for delegates to decide on further steps in policing Tehran's nuclear activities.

But in Tehran, Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told reporters Saturday that Iran still maintains it has a right to exempt about 20 centrifuges from the agreement. The European Union disagrees.

Iran says it wants to run the centrifuges purely for research, something Kharrazi insisted was not banned by a Nov. 7 agreement worked out with Germany, France and Britain on behalf of the European Union.

"The centrifuges will work under International Atomic Energy Agency supervision and will be for research purposes only," he told reporters.

The meeting was adjourned to give time for a formal Iranian response by letter to the IAEA on whether

the Tehran government accepts a full suspension, including the 20 centrifuges.

EU delegates to the Vienna meeting said discussions continued Saturday by phone between British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and Hassan Rowhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and his country's point man on nuclear matters. But they said the Europeans would not budge on insisting on a full freeze that included the centrifuges.

As the board meeting awaited a formal Iranian response, France, Germany and Britain toned down the language of proposed resolution they drafted in an attempt to entice Tehran to sign on to full suspension.

The confidential draft, made available to The Associated Press, weakened language on how any freeze would be monitored by the agency.

It authorizes IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei to "pursue his investigations" into remaining suspicious aspects of Iran's nuclear activities over the past two decades.

But instead of mandating him to "report without delay" to the board if there are violations, it says only that he should "inform" board members of irregularities.

But an EU official told the AP that Tehran's refusal to drop demands to exempt equipment from the enrichment suspension could prompt a much harsher resolution that could include the threat of U.N. Security Council action. Delegates from EU countries at the meeting said that if Iran did not give in by Monday, the meeting could be adjourned and a new date set for fresh consultations on the board's plan of action — and a new resolution.



An African locust sits on a leaf in Fuerteventura, one of Spain's Canary Islands, Saturday. The islands, a magnet for well-heeled tourists and destitute boat people, are reeling over its new breed of visitors.

Locusts reach Spain's Canary Islands

The Associated Press

MADRID, Spain — At least 2 million locusts have infested one of Spain's Canary Islands as a wave of bugs that devastated North Africa this summer moves on, officials said Saturday.

Officials will start fumigating with insecticide on Lanzarote, one of the islands closest to Africa, said the islands' agriculture minister, Pedro Rodriguez Zaragoza.

Smaller numbers of locusts have reached other islands in the archipelago off northwest Africa but the density does not approach the infestation level, he said.

For the past two weeks, helicopters have patrolled the coasts of

several islands in search of the kind of swarms that munched on land stretching from Morocco to Egypt this summer. A small plane has been flying similar patrols closer to the coast of Africa.

Rodriguez Zaragoza had said in remarks published Saturday in a Spanish newspaper that for now the locust presence in the Canary Islands was insignificant. But after visiting Lanzarote during the day he said the density had reached the infestation level there and officials had to start spraying.

Lanzarote is only about 60 miles from the closest African territory, the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara. Locusts can travel twice that far in just a day.

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Army deserter Jenkins sobs after release

BY ERIC TALMADGE

The Associated Press

CAMP ZAMA, Japan — Free for the first time in nearly four decades, U.S. Army deserter Charles Jenkins sobbed with joy as he was released from a military jail on Saturday after serving 25 days for abandoning his squadron and crossing the border into North Korea in 1965.

The frail 64-year-old, still in uniform and carrying a heavy duffel bag, broke down in tears after arriving at this U.S. Army base, where he was flown by Black Hawk helicopter after completing his sentence at Yokosuka Naval Base.

When asked how he felt, he told The Associated Press he was "happy," and then sobbed for several moments. "Forty years is a long time," he said.

The release ends the longest desertion case on U.S. record.

American deserters from the 1940s are still on the military's wanted list, but not one has turned himself in.

Jenkins, a native of Rich Square, N.C., testified in his Nov. 3 court-martial that he fled his Army post in South Korea on Jan. 5, 1965, because he had heard rumors that he was to be reassigned to combat in Vietnam. He said he didn't intend to stay in the North — instead, he had planned to defect to the Soviet Embassy there and eventually make his way back to the United States.

The communist regime in Pyongyang, however, kept him for 39 years, along with three other American deserters.

Jenkins was joined here on Saturday by his Japanese wife and two daughters, both born in North Korea. He was expected to stay on this base just south of Tokyo for about a week while officials complete paperwork to process him out of the military, before moving to his wife's hometown on Sado Island in northern Japan.



U.S. Army deserter Charles Jenkins, second right, is escorted upon arrival at Camp Zama, Japan, on Saturday. Jenkins, 64, was to join his family for several days before moving to his wife's hometown on Sado Island in northern Japan. U.S. Army officials are from left: 1st Sgt. Eugene Moses, Lt. Col. Paul Nigara and Capt. David G. Watson.

"My plan is to stay in Japan, if they will accept me," he said. "I want to go back to the United States, but only once. With my wife, I'll live in Japan, with my family."

Jenkins has said that North Korea used him as a propaganda tool in broadcasts across the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea and that he was forced to teach English to North Korean military officer cadets.

Two of the other three Americans have

since died, but the third, James Dresnock of Richmond, Va., still lives in the North. Dresnock was a private when he crossed into North Korea in 1962.

During his court-martial, Jenkins described a harsh existence.

"We slept on the floor, there was most often no electricity and we had no running water," he testified. Jenkins said they were forced to study — in Korean — the philosophy of then-North Korean leader Kim Il

Sung for 10 hours a day. If they didn't memorize enough, they were forced to study 16 hours on Sunday, their only day off. "I longed to leave that place every day," Jenkins told the court.

A turning point came in 1980, when he met and married Hitomi Soga, a Japanese woman who had been abducted by North Korean agents in 1978 to teach Japanese language and culture to its spies.

The marriage was what got Jenkins his freedom.

At an unprecedented summit in 2002 with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il admitted that his country had kidnapped Soga and several other Japanese and allowed her and the four other survivors to return home.

Jenkins initially stayed behind, but Soga's effort to reunite her family generated great sympathy in Japan. In July, Tokyo arranged for Jenkins and his two North Korea-born daughters to join Soga in Jakarta, Indonesia.

They were then flown back to Japan, ostensibly because he needed emergency medical care for an abdominal problem.

Jenkins was discharged from a Tokyo hospital on Sept. 11 and immediately turned himself in to American authorities at Camp Zama, the U.S. Army's Japan headquarters. In a plea bargain, he was sentenced to a month in prison. He was released five days early for good behavior.

Though he is now a free man, Jenkins will still not be completely separated from the Army; until his automatic appeal process is completed, he could remain on "involuntary excess leave" status for one to two years.

"We're very happy that he's out and free," said Jenkins' brother-in-law, Lee Harrell, in Weldon, N.C. Harrell, who is married to Jenkins' younger sister Pat, said the family would welcome a visit from him to the United States.

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Bush urges compromise in N. Ireland

BY SHAWN POGATCHNIK

The Associated Press

BELFAST, Northern Ireland — President Bush has lent his weight to a final push for reviving peace-sharing in Northern Ireland, telling the province's Protestant leader to do his best to cut a deal with longtime Catholic enemies.

Ian Paisley, whose Democratic Unionist Party represents most of Northern Ireland's British Protestant majority, received a telephone call from Bush immediately before Paisley and his senior aides began to discuss the latest draft of a confidential British-Irish blueprint for compromise.

Bush told reporters Friday at his Texas ranch that he had called Paisley to try to nudge the peace process forward.

Bush said he had sought to get the two sides "to the table to get a deal done, to close the agreement they've been working on for quite a while."

Paisley — a stridently anti-Catholic evangelist who has spent decades destroying Protestant rivals who dared compromise — said he told Bush he wanted to reach agreement with Sinn Féin, the political face of the outlawed Irish Republican Army, "but any deal must be fair."

"I reminded the president of the fact that he would not have terrorists in his government, and that we must be satisfied that IRA terrorism is over and cannot return," said Paisley, 78.

The Bush telephone diplomacy, being followed by a similar call to Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams, was reminiscent of the interven-

tions made by Bush's predecessor, Bill Clinton, in the hours leading up to the landmark Good Friday peace pact of 1998.

That U.S.-brokered deal has achieved or advanced dozens of goals to end a 35-year conflict over this British territory. But its core objective — sustaining a stable Catholic-Protestant administration — has proved impossible.

That could change in the next week of expected high-pressure negotiations, particularly within the ranks of both Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionists.

Their electoral triumphs last year at the expense of moderate parties appeared to banish hopes of reviving power-sharing. But the British and Irish prime ministers, Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern, have proved unrelenting in pressing the polar opposites toward what would be a historic deal.

"This is a very crucial weekend in the peace process," said Ahern, who signed off Thursday night on a redrafted Anglo-Irish formula after a long discussion with Blair. "I wish the parties well. They've very big decisions," said Ahern, who noted that both Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionists "have to call it, but the implications are enormous."

Ahern said he expected a verdict from both parties early next week, with a possible statement from the outlawed IRA to follow.

Sinn Féin leaders traveled back to Belfast from London after separate talks involving Blair and leaders of South Africa's ruling African National Congress, including former President Nelson Mandela. The South Africans have previously urged Sinn Féin to adopt a pragmatic approach during previous junctures in Northern Ireland's decade-old peace process.

Letter bomb suspect

MUNICH, Germany — German police have found the burned body of a man they believe was behind a string of letter-bomb attacks in the southern state of Bavaria, officials said Saturday.

Samples of DNA taken from the body match those taken from nine letter bombs received since April by Bavarian politicians, other officials and the Polish consulate in Munich.

Garage collapse

GRETZENBACH, Switzerland — The concrete ceiling of a parking garage collapsed in a fire in northern Switzerland on Saturday, trapping seven firefighters inside, officials said.

Rescuers searched for the missing firefighters amid thick smoke still coming out of the rubble Saturday afternoon, said a spokesman for a fireman for the Solothurn cantonal (state) police.

The missing firefighters were part of a group of about 11 who entered the garage.

Climbers still missing

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — Nicaraguan officials said late Friday that they're still unsure what's become of an American and a Russian climber who disappeared 10 days ago while attempting to climb a volcano.

The army said Friday morning that Jordan Alexander Resner, 23, of San Diego and Nicholas Roth, 28, of Great Britain had been spotted during a air search over the jungle.

But later, the head of the army's public relations department backtracked on that information, saying he couldn't confirm that the two had been seen.

Relics returned

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II, seeking to heal rifts with other Christians, on Saturday handed over the relics of two Orthodox saints that were brought to Rome from ancient Constantinople centuries ago.

The pope sat beside Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, in St. Peter's Basilica as the bones of the saints were brought to the altar.

The two religious leaders blessed the relics before the reliquaries were carried away by Vatican ushers for return later in the day to Istanbul, Turkey.

New political party

LONDON — Actress Vanessa Redgrave and her brother, political activist Corin Redgrave, on Saturday launched a political party dedicated to human rights, called the Peace and Progress Party.

The party, co-founded with Azmat Begg, the father of a Guantanamo Bay detainee, says it will field candidates and endorse politicians with strong human rights records in the next general election.

Party organizers will set an official agenda for the group in early spring and will choose candidates then, Redgrave said.

From The Associated Press

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Mother reports son in school attack

BY JOE MCDONALD

The Associated Press

BELING — The mother of a 21-year-old man accused of slashing as many as nine boys to death as they slept in their high school dormitory turned her son in after he attempted to commit suicide, a news report said.

Yan Yanning, 21, was reported to police after he attempted to take his life late Thursday in the city of Ruzhou, the Xinhua News Agency said on Saturday. The agency said Yan confessed and said he slashed the students out of hatred.

Xinhua put the death toll in the

attack at eight, but another state-run news agency, the China News Service, said nine students were killed.

Yan broke into the central China dormitory at 11:45 p.m. on Thursday and "chopped eight people to death," Xinhua said. The China News Service cited a survivor as saying that during the attack, the man with the knife said, "Don't blame me."

It was the fourth knife attack reported at a Chinese school or day care center in as many months. The earlier assaults left one child dead and 42 people injured.

The spate of violence prompted the government of President Hu Jintao to issue a nationwide order in September for schools to hire guards and tighten security.

The reason for the surge in knife attacks isn't clear. They have taken place in areas throughout China and involve attackers from different backgrounds. In the only other fatal case until this week, an attacker at a Beijing kindergarten was reported to be an employee of the school who had a history of mental illness.

But China's cities and towns seethe with grudges and personal feuds amid wrenching economic and social change.

Fatal bombings, mass poisonings and other attacks are reported frequently, usually blamed on people trying to hurt business rivals or seeking revenge in often minor disputes. Firearms are rarely used because private gun ownership is illegal in most parts of China.

Last month, six men were arrested in Beijing in a knife attack at an Internet cafe that left 14 people bloodied. News reports said the attackers wanted revenge on several men they had met at the cafe and when they couldn't be found slashed customers at random.

Ruzhou, a city of 920,000 people, is located about 450 miles southwest of Beijing in Henan province, southwest of the giant industrial city of Zhengzhou. The city government Web site says coal mining is a major industry.

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IN THE STATES

Wis. community grieves for slain hunters

Family, friends begin attending funerals for victims

BY JENNY PRICE

The Associated Press

RICE LAKE, Wis. — Orange ribbons are tied around the lamp posts on Main Street. Tiny ones flutter from car antennas. A few are stuck on business signs.

The slaying of six hunters has saddened virtually this entire community of 8,500. Already one has been laid to rest. Three more were to be buried Saturday, the other two on Monday.

"There's nobody that's not touched in town," said Bob Stanonik, who stood on Main Street as 100 to 200 people gathered Friday to remember Mark Roidt, 28.

Chai Vang, of St. Paul, is accused of fatally shooting the hunter when they confronted him about trespassing on land owned by two of the victims. He also faces charges for wounding two others.

Vang, a Hmong immigrant, told authorities the hunters surrounded him and used racial slurs before one fired a shot at

him. One of the survivors said Vang started shooting first.

Many of the mourners Friday wore orange ribbons on their coats.

Jodi Anderson knew Roidt because he often ate at the restaurant where she is a cook. She, like others in the community, still can't believe the hunters are gone.

"I'm very angry," Anderson said. "This is so wrong."

Roidt's mother, Karen Roidt, told mourners that her son died doing something he loved, according to family friend Pat Malesa.

The funeral was closed to reporters.

The funerals scheduled Saturday were for Al Laski, 43, Robert Crotteau, 42, the owner of the land where the shooting happened; and his son, Joey Crotteau, 20. Jessica Willers, 27, and Denny Drew, 55, will be remembered Monday. Willers' father, Terry Willers, and Lauren Hesebeck were wounded. Both have been released from the hospital.

The deer hunting season, which ended Sunday night, is con-

sidered a holiday by many in the area.

"The hunting week up here is called holy week," Stanonik said. "Families get together, father, son, grandson."

Burnell Hanson, who employed Roidt for a few months doing some carpentry work, said the town needs time to heal.

Some hunters didn't return to the woods after the shootings, he said.

Orlen Eidahl of Rice Lake doesn't think the shootings will keep people from the hobby they love.

"We all are saddened, but things will go on," he said.

Associated Press writer Xiao Zhang contributed to this story from Rice Lake.



Palibearers carry the casket of Mark Roidt out of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Dodge, Wis., following his funeral Friday. Roidt's funeral was the first of six deer hunters shot and killed in northwest Wisconsin on Sunday.

Bush asks Americans to help those in need

The Associated Press

CRAWFORD, Texas — President Bush issued a holiday-season call on Americans to volunteer and give to charity — "to share our blessings with the least among us."

He singled out for special praise those who have given time and energy to U.S. troops stationed around the world.

"The greatest challenges of our time have come to the men and women who protect our nation," Bush said in his weekly radio address Saturday.


"Like generations before them, today's armed forces have liberated captive peoples and shown compassion for the suffering and delivered hope to the oppressed," Bush said. "In the past year, they have fought the terrorists abroad so that we do not have to face those enemies here at home."

Bush said there was much to appreciate this Thanksgiving weekend. "We're grateful for our beautiful country, and for the prosperity we enjoy. We're grateful for the chance to live, work and worship in freedom," Bush said.

"We also recognize our duty to share our blessings with the least among us," the president said. "Throughout the holiday season, schools, churches, synagogues and other generous organizations gather food and clothing for their neighbors in need."

Many young people give part of their holiday to volunteer at homeless shelters or food pantries.

"On Thanksgiving, and on every day of the year, America is a more hopeful nation because of the volunteers who serve the weak and the vulnerable."



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U.S. updates Mideast terror threat warning

WASHINGTON — The State Department said Friday the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and upcoming elections to determine his successor may create conditions that would affect the security of American citizens.

A department travel warning said that during the 40-day traditional period of mourning, large, unpredictable crowds may gather for prayers at sites in the Old City of Jerusalem as well as at local mosques throughout Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

"Both before and after Palestinian Authority elections, the possibility of mass demonstrations and unrest will continue to exist," it said.

The warning was an update of previous advisories that urged Americans to depart Gaza immediately and to defer travel to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza because of the security situation.

From The Associated Press

Son's Iraq tour shapes lawmaker's opposition

Rep. Duncan Hunter opposes intelligence reform bill that could strip authority from Defense Department

BY KEN GUGGENHEIM

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rep. Duncan Hunter says his son, a Marine artillery officer who has served in Iraq, asked him for two favors.

One was to fix his Ford Bronco. The other was to stand firm in opposing an intelligence bill that would strip authority from the Pentagon.

Hunter didn't repair the Bronco, but he came through on the intelligence bill — a key reason that a compromise favored by President Bush, top congressional leaders and the Sept. 11 commission fell apart.

To his critics, Hunter, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, has been the Pentagon's tool, undermining bipartisan efforts to make urgently needed intelligence reforms in an effort to protect the Defense Department's turf.

But Hunter insists he isn't protecting turf. He says he's trying to protect the lives of troops, includ-

ing his 27-year-old son, 1st Lt. Duncan Duane Hunter, who has served two tours in Iraq. The lawmaker believes that shifting responsibility for satellite images and other intelligence now handled by the Pentagon could ultimately endanger troops.

Hunter said his son and other soldiers who have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan told him of the importance those images play in combat.

"My son was able to do things with intelligence in his artillery operations that my father, who was a World War II Marine artillery officer in the south Pacific, was never able to do," said Hunter, R-Calif.

Hunter's concerns have been echoed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, Gen. Richard Myers. But lawmakers who supported the compromise said it would have ensured that troops receive timely intelligence. Some are skeptical of Hunter's motives.

Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Conn., said he believes Hunter "would oppose the bill no matter

what argument he had to use to kill it."

Sen. Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said in a statement that "cynical House Republicans" never had any intention of reaching a deal.

The other main opponent of the compromise, House Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., has said such comments will only make it harder to pass an intelligence reform bill.

Hunter shrugged off both criticism and White House pressure. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney have called Hunter to seek his support.

"You don't ever get a sense that he feels that pressure," said retired Marine Corps Gen. Terry L. Paul, a friend of Hunter's.

"Once he formulates an opinion on something, he's steadfast in it."

Paul said he learned that about a dozen years ago, before becoming friends with Hunter. Paul was in the office of Sen. William Cohen, R-Maine, a future defense



Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., right, seen with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, center, and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Peter Pace, confirmed his opposition to the Sept. 11 Bill on Nov. 22 and echoed Pentagon concerns that the realignment of intelligence authority could interfere with the military chain of command and endanger troops in the field.

secretary, who was out negotiating a military issue with Hunter.

He said Cohen walked into his office and "threw down his papers on the floor in a display of frustration" and said jokingly, "If I had a gun, I don't know who I'd shoot first, me or Duncan Hunter."

Hunter, 56, is a burly, affable and sometimes disheveled Vietnam veteran who, true to his name, is a passionate hunter.

Military issues have dominated his 24 years in Congress. He became Armed Services Committee chairman two years ago, yet despite the powerful position, remains little known outside of military circles and his San Diego County district.

He is a conservative who has fa-

vored increasing defense spending, cutting bureaucracy and strengthening the defense industrial base. He strongly supports the war in Iraq.

Hunter defied Donald Rumsfeld when the defense secretary was under fire because of the Iraq prison abuse scandal. He not only rejected Democratic requests that he investigate the abuse, but he publicly criticized his Senate counterpart and fellow Republican, Sen. John Warner of Virginia, for doing so. Warner's insistence on holding numerous public hearings to get to the bottom of the scandal had been receiving bipartisan praise.

"I think the Senate has become mesmerized by cameras and I think that's sad," Hunter said then.



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ACLU: U.S. opposed security measures for new passports

BY LESLIE MILLER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration opposed security measures for new microchip-equipped passports that privacy advocates contended were needed to prevent identity theft, government snooping or a terror attack, according to State Department documents released Friday.

The passports, scheduled to be issued by the end of 2005, could be read electronically from as far away as 30 feet, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, which obtained the documents under a Freedom of Information Act request.

Though the passports wouldn't include transmitters of their own, they would have antennas to allow a reader to capture the data.

The ability to read remotely, or "skim," personal data raises the possibility that passport holders would be vulnerable to identity theft, the ACLU said. It also would allow government agents to find out covertly who was attending a political meeting or make it easier for terrorists to target Americans traveling abroad, the ACLU said.

Frank Moss, deputy assistant secretary of state for passport services, said the United States wants to ensure the safety and security of Americans traveling abroad.

"We are still hard at work at ensuring the security and integrity of the data on the chip," Moss said.

He said, however, encrypting the data might make it more difficult for other countries to read the passports.

"It flies in the face of global interoperability," Moss said. In a memo drafted in August 2003, Moss dismissed objections that information could be copied remotely.

"There is little risk here since we plan to store only currently collected data with a facial image," he wrote. "The U.S. will recommend against the use of PINs (personal identification numbers) or other methods that might be required to unlock a chip for reading."

Moss said in a telephone interview on Friday that the passport data does not need to be encrypted because it does not include fingerprints. Stealing fingerprint data might allow unauthorized access to automatic teller machines or secure computer networks.



Christina and Howard Pilot, left, help their son, Carl, and Chaitratharn Chareonwang, right, with their homework in their State College, Pa., home Wednesday night. Chaitratharn is an exchange student from Thailand. The number of international students at U.S. high schools has dropped significantly in the last decade, partly because schools and families are less willing to play host.

Number of exchange students decreasing

BY DAVID B. CARUSO
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — High school foreign exchange students became such a part of American culture in the 1980s and '90s that, for a while, no Hollywood teen movie was complete without one. But the number of international students at U.S. high schools has dropped significantly in the last decade, partly because schools and families are less willing to play host.

"We don't really have a lot of research into why it is happening, but it is happening. There are fewer students," said John Hishmeh, executive director of an umbrella group for most of the country's big exchange programs.

Some of the decline may be due to visa rules that took effect in the late 1990s that made it more difficult for international students to attend U.S. public schools, he said. Security and political concerns may have played a role too, although the downturn appears to have begun before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Hishmeh said it might be more likely that, with the end of the Cold War, busy American families and cash-strapped school districts simply became less interested in hosting foreigners.

Last year, 27,742 foreign exchange students visited the United States through programs accredited by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, the organization Hishmeh leads.

The numbers were 44,291 in the 1999-2000 school year and 62,005 in 1993-94.

The State Department has noticed a recent downturn in enrollments too, although for a shorter time.

About 39,000 foreign secondary students were admitted to the United States on exchange program visas in the 1999-2000 school year, compared with 28,200 the year of the terrorist attacks and 24,600 in 2002-2003, according to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Unlike the figures from the Council on Standards, those numbers

don't include students who come for less than a full semester.

Born in the wake of World War II, high school exchange programs have long helped showcase the American people to nations where the United States was trying to build a better relationship.

Seven of the 10 places that sent the most students to study in American high schools last year were countries that either fought the United States in a war or were a battleground for U.S. troops: Germany, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, France, Italy and China. An eighth was Cold War opponent Russia.

The State Department looked to expand on that tradition in 2003 by founding a \$10 million program aimed at encouraging student exchanges with Muslim countries.

About 160 students from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia attended U.S. high schools in the program's first year. This year, enrollment increased to more than 400. Eventually the State Department hopes to expand to 1,000 students.

The challenge may be finding enough American schools and families willing to play host.

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Computer hackers turning their sights on cell phones

BY YUKI NOGUCHI
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Early this month, several Web sites began offering software promising ringtunes and screensavers for certain cell phones.

But those who downloaded the software found that it turned every icon on their cell phones' screens into a skull and crossbones and disabled their phones, so they could no longer send or receive text messages or access contact lists or calendars.

Security experts dubbed the virus "Skulls" and consider it an early warning from hackers of the damage they could do as they turn their malevolent talents from computers to cell phones.

"Hackers are simply trying to put it out there that it can be done," said Vincent Weaver, senior director of security response for Symantec, a security software firm. "The motivation is to say (cell phones) aren't as secure as you think."

Mobile phones are a tempting target because they have become so much a part of everyday life. In addition, consumers are buying "smart phones" with Internet connections that provide an easier pathway for cell-phone infections. Few phones now in use come equipped with anti-virus protection, although some companies are starting to install it. Most cell phone users aren't on guard for viral infections like those that periodically bring down computers worldwide, and, at this point, there is little they can do to protect themselves.

Skulls is one of five cell phone viruses identified this year, according to security experts and analysts. The scale of such attacks is hard to quantify because the federally funded CERT Coordination Center at Carnegie Mellon University, which monitors viruses and worms on the Internet, does not separately tally reports of cell-phone viruses.

But there are anecdotal reports. For instance, in Japan, cell phones have frequently been "spammed" with junk messages, some of which redi-

rect phones to Web sites that cause the phones to crash.

Most basic phones can send and receive text messages, which makes them vulnerable to some attacks. And new ways of using cell phones encourage the spread of viruses.

Furthermore existing anti-virus software for computers hasn't been programmed for cell phones.

"By 2006, cell phone viruses will be what viruses are on the Internet in 2004," because cell phones are, in many ways, becoming more like miniature PCs, said John Pescatore, an analyst with Gartner, a technology research firm.

Cell phones use a number of different operating systems, meaning hackers must design separate programs to disable each one. That makes it harder to design a mass attack. "It's never going to be as uniform a landscape for hackers," so it's not clear how broad an attack might be, said John Jackson, an analyst with the Yankee Group.

Still, concerns are growing because of the growth in the usage of cell phones. There are 170 million cell phones in use compared to fewer than 116 million personal computers, according to the trade group CTIA — The Wireless Association and market-research firm IDC.

Experts have tried to anticipate how big a problem viruses might be by simulating attacks on cell phones in software labs. They have found e-mail viruses can multiply on their own by sending messages through a cell phone's address book. Viruses can allow hackers into a phone to access passwords or corporate data stored on the device. And they can be used to manipulate the phone to make calls or send messages at the phone owner's expense.

"The nightmare scenario with cell phones is a virus that would delete the contents of your phone, or start calling (a toll number) on its own from the phone or recording every single one of your conversations and sending the recorded conversation somewhere," said Mikko Hypponen, director of anti-virus research at F-Secure Corp., a Finnish security firm.

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Sticky start to shopping season in Louisiana

The Associated Press

LAFAYETTE, La. — The busiest shopping day of the year turned out to be a sticky affair.

Vandals apparently glued the locks on dozens of Lafayette's biggest retailers, preventing managers from opening up promptly on lucrative "Black Friday." Hundreds of shoppers, some of whom arrived before dawn, were forced to wait outside Barnes & Noble,

Vandals glue locks at several retail stores causing 'Black Friday' disruption

Old Navy and other stores while managers summoned locksmiths.

At least 200 locks on dozens of businesses were glued, including main entrances, rear doors and employee entrances, locksmiths said. Wilson said. Wilson's first job at about 5 a.m. Friday was to make his way to the front door lock at Old Navy — by pushing

through about 500 shoppers waiting outside.

"I found about a half a tube of glue stuck inside," he said.

Kevin Vizona, head locksmith for Pop-A-Lock in Lafayette, said the vandals squirted the glue deep inside the keyholes, forcing him to drill holes and remove the locks from the doors.

"We've never run into a day that's been quite so busy with these particular problems," Vizona said.

Chuck Trenchard, an employee of S&K Menswear, said the prank had cost his store more than \$1,000 in business, because potential customers had arrived early, then took off because they

couldn't get inside.

Most of the stores had their doors open for customers by mid-morning, Vizona said.

Police said they had no suspects but were investigating the vandalism as cases of possible criminal mischief or intentional damage to property, both misdemeanor.

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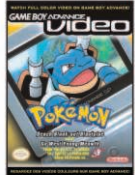
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Man jumps to his death

NEW YORK — A man jumped to his death Friday from the 86th-floor observation deck at the Empire State Building, one of Manhattan's busiest tourist destinations, police said.

The apparent suicide forced police to briefly close the landmark on Fifth Avenue to tourists in New York for the holiday weekend.

The man apparently climbed over a security fence that encloses the observation deck before leaping off. He hit a landing on the sixth floor, where he died instantly, police said.

No identification was found on his body.

At least 31 other people have committed suicide at the Empire State Building since it opened in 1931.

Missing passenger

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — A 54-year-old passenger vanished as a ship returned from a five-day cruise to the Bahamas, and a day-long ocean search turned up no sign of him Friday.

Glenn Sheridan, from Williamsburg, Va., was reported missing by his wife Thursday, after the Carnival Cruise Line ship Celebration docked in Jacksonville.

The ship's electronic exit and entry program showed he had not left the vessel after the arrival, and a crew search of the boat came up empty, Carnival said.

Gloria Sheridan said she had last seen her husband about 1:30 a.m. Thursday. She said he was an early riser and might have fallen overboard as early as 4 a.m., said Coast Guard Petty Officer Bobby Nash.

Nash said the ship then would have been about 13 miles off northeastern Florida. A boat and helicopter scoured 350 square miles of ocean and the St. Johns River. The search was suspended Friday.

Woman sues college

ROME, Ga. — A college student filed a lawsuit accusing the school of failing to protect her from a former student who allegedly stalked, assaulted and repeatedly raped her.

The woman said the school received repeated complaints of attacks by the man but did nothing about it.

The woman filed the lawsuit Tuesday against Perry College and Marcus Sadelowsky, who has transferred to another school. He has not been charged, and denied the allegations with confrontation by college officials last spring.

From The Associated Press

Interpreters can aid patient care, study finds

By JOANN LOVIGLIO

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Romualdo Rivera arrives at the emergency room with what seems to be a complaint of chest pain. But it's hard to be sure — he doesn't speak English.

He's a pale but solidly built man with thinning gray hair, and his face reddens as his shirt is removed, his pant legs are pushed up and electrodes are attached to his calves and chest.

As nurses and technicians come and go from the small, curtained examination area, his eyes dart from one person to the next, hoping for a familiar phrase, even a word.

Unlike TV portrayals of frenzied big-city emergency rooms, the scene slows in real-life hospitals when a doctor and patient can't communicate. It becomes like a game of charades, as one doctor put it, with lots of pointing and gesturing.

Across the United States, the approach to care for non-English-speaking patients is hit-or-miss. Fewer than a fourth of U.S. hospitals have professionally trained interpreters, a study found. In some places, hospital employees with no medical training are called in to interpret. In others, relatives, neighbors or acquaintances do the job.

In the worst cases, the patient's problem gets lost in translation.

Hospital officials realize they need interpreters, but most haven't figured out how to pay for them. The Temple University Health System took action when two hospitals had a surge of Spanish-speaking patients.

Now, Temple and nine other medical institutions nationwide are taking part in a program that could show why hospitals can't afford to be without formally trained medical interpreters.

From 1990 to 2000, Philadelphia's Hispanic population rose from roughly 89,000 to 129,000, or more than 44 percent. Many settled in neighborhoods around the two Temple hospitals in north Philadelphia.

In a relatively short time, patients from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Central America and South America were accounting for 20 percent of all admissions, said Charles Solt-off, a Temple executive.

"Because so many of them spoke little or no English, we weren't able to serve their needs as well as we wanted to," he said.

So in the past spring, Temple hired four interpreters with an \$850,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and began sending them to medical classes.

Temple and the other hospitals getting grants must develop a comprehensive medical interpreting program. They've also been asked to document how trained medical interpreters affect patient care and hospital costs.

Health care advocates are convinced that having no interpreters means longer stays, unneces-

sary tests, more repeat visits and even medical mistakes.

Hospitals have long relied on friends or relatives of patients to help translate, but it's an arrangement that comes with risks.

Patients sometimes hide details from children or friends filling in as translators. And sometimes family members want to shield patients from unwelcome news from their doctors, said Marbella Sala, who manages medical inter-

preting services at University of California-Davis.

"We had a case where a patient was being treated for a venereal disease and asked the doctor how she could have contracted it. The doctor explained it, but her husband, who was interpreting, told her that she got it from a public toilet," Sala said.

The doctor suspected something was amiss and an interpreter later cleared things up.

UC Davis has one of the nation's largest and oldest medical interpreter programs. Established in 1987 with a staff of seven, it now employs 42 people who speak 19 languages — from Spanish and Russian to Hmong and American Sign Language.

"It has made us the place of choice for many patients," Sala said.

Without interpreters, Bell says later, doctors must resort to "a lot of pointing and charades."

Since 2000, hospitals and private practices getting federal funds have been required to provide interpretation services under the Civil Rights Act. They've largely made do since then with untrained or under-trained people.

"For so long the myth has been that you could get by using friends, family members, staff; now there's growing understanding that that's not enough," said Sala, at UC Davis.

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Fat vs. fit: Scientists weigh in on debate

By ROB STEIN
The Washington Post

At 5 feet 4 and 190 pounds, Jude Mathews would seem to personify the health crisis facing a nation in the throes of an obesity epidemic. But the librarian from Evanston, Ill., begs to differ.

"My blood pressure is rock solid. My cholesterol numbers are basically fine. My doctors don't see anything they say I need

to worry about," said Mathews, who is 55, exercises regularly and eats a well-balanced diet. "One little number on the scale is not all there is to your health."

As medical authorities have become increasingly alarmed by the rapidly rising number of Americans who are overweight

and obese, people such as Mathews find themselves at the center of an intense debate: Can people be overweight but still healthy?

In books, medical journals and at public health conferences, scientists have been dueling over the relative importance of fitness

vs. fitness, and whether there is common ground between the camps. A small but vocal cadre of researchers has been challenging conventional wisdom, arguing that not only is it possible to be both fat and fit, but that fitness is more important for health.

"All too often, medical profes-

sionals say it's the obesity we have to cure. That's the be-all and end-all. It's not," said Steven N. Blair, who heads the Cooper Institute, a Dallas research foundation focused on physical activity. "The impression is that everyone who is overweight faces an elevated risk for mortality. That's simply not true."

Other experts maintain that while there may be exceptions, the evidence is clear for most people: Being overweight significantly increases the risk of a host of debilitating and often deadly health problems, including heart attacks, strokes, cancer and diabetes.

"Being overweight has a clear association with important health problems, and even modest weight loss has important health benefits," said Walter Willett, an expert on nutrition and health at the Harvard School of Public Health. "To tell people it doesn't matter is really misleading. It does make a difference. It makes a huge difference."

Playing down risks of excess weight is dangerous, Willett and others say, particularly with two-thirds of Americans already overweight, including one-third who are officially obese.

Blair and other fitness proponents acknowledge some overweight people are at increased risk for health problems, and many people may benefit from losing weight. But they argue society focuses far too much on dropping pounds and far too little on exercise, eating well and being physically fit.

"I don't believe height and weight is a good indication of health," said Joanne Ikeda, co-director of the Center for Weight and Health at the University of California at Berkeley. "If a fat person or obese person has normal blood pressure, if their total cholesterol and glucose levels are normal, and they are healthy, there is no reason they should necessarily have to lose weight."

Many people are simply born to be bigger, which does not necessarily mean they are destined to have health problems, especially if they exercise regularly and eat well, she said.

The increased health risks blamed on being overweight are really the result of many overweight people being out of shape, having poor diets and other unhealthy habits, Blair and others say. If those factors are considered, studies have found that any increased risk virtually disappears, they say.

Ikeda tells people to see if they are "metabolically healthy." If she spots warning signs, she recommends exercise and a nutritious diet, but with the goal of making people fitter, not necessarily thinner.

The focus on weight loss is especially misguided because most people simply are unable to lose substantial weight and keep it off, Ikeda, Blair and others say. Despite the intensity of the debate, medical experts say the best strategy would be to encourage people to exercise regularly and eat well. Some will lose weight, some won't, but all will benefit from a healthier lifestyle.

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Tragic death

FL ST. PETERSBURG — Edna Buice had a stroke a few weeks ago, but she was doing so well that her children thought she might be home for Thanksgiving.

Those hopes ended Nov. 7 when the 82-year-old died in a bizarre accident at Bayfront Medical Center.

A padded belt restraint was fastened around Buice's waist, meant to keep her upright in the wheelchair because the stroke had paralyzed her right side.

Buice somehow slipped under the restraint while left unattended. A nurse found her sitting on the floor in front of the wheelchair with the restraint caught around her neck.

The nurse tried CPR, but it was too late, said police Sgt. Mike Puetz.

"My mom was one of the sweetest, kindest, most godly women I have ever known in my entire life," said Lou Ballenger, one of Buice's four children. "She wanted to live very much. She was improving. And then this horrible, horrible tragedy."

Harassment settlement

NJ NEWARK — A jury awarded \$2.8 million to a former sheriff's officer who said she suffered sexual harassment from other officers because she's a lesbian. Karen Caggiano, 43, testified she had to use the same bathroom and locker room as male officers, and that pictures of naked women were posted on lockers.

Her lawyers also say one officer repeatedly exposed himself. The lawyer for the county said the department responded thoroughly to Caggiano's complaints.

Bicyclist killed in crash

FL TAMPA — A sheriff's deputy's truck and killed a bicyclist as the man pedaled home from a convenience store along a dark road.

Hillsborough County sheriff's spokesman Lt. Rod Reder said Deputy Steve Figueroa, 34, a first-year member of the force, was on patrol in a cruiser that night.

A bicyclist veered in front of him in an attempt to cross the road. Reder said. The deputy swerved but ended up striking the bicyclist, sending the man flying to the side of the road. A pickup then hit the bicyclist again, tossing it across the road.

Several family members at the scene said the bicyclist was Ronald Seger, 43, who lived near the crash site. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Study on asthma risk

NY BUFFALO — Researchers from the University at Buffalo have found another reason to be concerned over traffic backups at the U.S.-Canadian border: People living near the crossings, who are prone to commercial truck backups, appear to be at greater risk of developing asthma. Researchers say their study conducted at Buffalo's Peace Bridge



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

has implications for all busy border crossings.

Death debt mystery

AR HARRISON — Authorities are searching for a man accused of avoiding a debt by faking his own death. Terry Presnell, a former small newspaper publisher, allegedly sent a phony death certificate to a printing business to which he owed \$1,857. The document said Presnell died in a traffic accident in Mexico.

Town sues to use 'Jesus'

SC GREAT FALLS — The Town Council voted 6-1 to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn lower court rulings that prevent it from using Jesus Christ's name in prayers at meetings. Both a U.S. District judge and a federal appeals court agreed council members cannot refer to a specific deity in prayers at meetings. The original lawsuit was filed in 2001 by Darla Wynne, a Wiccan high priestess.

Movie pirate nabbed

CA LOS ANGELES — A Malaysian man must pay film studios \$23.8 million for running a Web site that allowed paying members to watch pirated movies, the Motion Picture Association said.

A federal judge announced the decision against Tan Soo Leong at



Holiday lights

Christmas lights and fireworks illuminate Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Mo., while thousands attend the traditional lighting ceremony.

a hearing Monday, said John Malcolm, MPA's director of worldwide anti-piracy operations.

Leong ran the Web site film88.com and a company called MasterSurf Inc., which set up computer servers overseas to protect the business from liability, Malcolm said Tuesday.

The MPA said Leong previously ran a similar Web site, movie88.com, which was shut down by officials in Taiwan. Dutch courts also shut down servers he later set up in Iran and the Netherlands, the MPA said.

Monkey gets new home

HI HONOLULU — A monkey seized from a raid on a Makiki home last month will have a new home at a Big Island zoo, while state agriculture officials have dismissed a complaint about three other monkeys kept in a display at a nightclub.

The two-year-old squirrel monkey seized by state officials had been part of an aquarium-style display at the Blue Tropic Restaurant and Nightclub before owner Darren Tsuchiya sold it. But the man who bought the monkey didn't have a state permit or bond to own a restricted animal, and he was cited and fined \$1,000.

Tsuchiya was cited and fined \$200 for failing to comply with bond conditions required for possessing a nonhuman primate.

Man drops business plan

IL ANTIOCH — A businessman has given up plans to open a coffee shop that angered residents with its name.

Tony Liotta had signed up to open a Bad Ass Coffee franchise in the northern Illinois community of Antioch and argued that the chain takes its name from the donkeys used to haul beans in Hawaii.

But Antioch residents weren't convinced, and the village board earlier this month passed a resolution that condemned the name as "repugnant to the entire concept of family values."

Now, Liotta has canceled plans to open the store, citing personal reasons.

Bad Ass Coffee is based in Salt Lake City. Executive Harold Hill called Liotta's decision disappointing and said the chain will try to find a new owner for the Antioch shop.

Lawsuit dismissed

PA ALLENTOWN — A lawsuit against the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation arguing that it was responsible for the death of a Berks County woman killed by a chunk of ice thrown from an overpass has been dismissed.

Elaine Cowell, 33, was killed in January 2003 when a 15-year-old boy threw the ice off a bridge near Allentown. The ice crashed through the windshield of a van in which Cowell was riding, killing her.

The lawsuit argued that PennDOT was negligent because it had not installed a fence on the overpass to prevent people from throwing objects onto the highway. A fence was installed there after Cowell's death.



We all fall down

Dave Durbala and his daughter, Gretchen, 5, smile as they tip over while

sledding at Perkins Park in Burlington, Iowa.



Feeding flying friends

Trever James of Tyler, Texas, throws corn flakes to the geese and ducks at Craighead Forest Park in Jonesboro, Ark.



Right of way

Tim Knapp of Bow, Wash., yields to traffic while canoeing down Chuckanut Drive in Bow after the Samish River flooded its banks.



Joyful reopening

Connor Brodbeck, 16 months, celebrates the reopening of FAO Schwarz Flagship Store on New York's Fifth Avenue on Thanksgiving Day.



Helping hands

Three-year-old Kelly Tounou of Moline, Ill., helps out with the Thanksgiving dinner clean-up effort as she pushes a cart full of dirty tablecloths through the Christ The King, Believers Together building after a community dinner.



Wacky weather

Gary Vest, a Caterpillar Inc. accountant, struggles with a strong gust of wind while crossing in downtown Peoria, Ill.



Waiting on a ride

Michael Farleigh, 14, of Clearcreek Township, Ohio, practices playing his guitar as he waits in front of the Amanda Clearcreek School for a ride home.

Marriage twice as nice

NE KEARNEY — Amy Springer really loves her husband, Marine Lance Cpl. Brett Springer. She's married him twice in the last 12 months.

The Springers had planned a November 2004 ceremony but found themselves tying the knot at the courthouse a whole year before Brett was shipped out to Iraq. They said their "I do's" again Friday, the date they had originally picked for their wedding. This time, though, the setting was First United Methodist Church in Kearney.

"We were already planning this [Friday's] wedding when we found out he was leaving," said Amy, 23. "So we just decided it would be easier to get married before he left again."

Amy's father, 52-year-old Mike Oliver, couldn't be at the church ceremony because he is in Kuwait with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 107th Medium Truck Company.

"It was either do it while he (Brett) was here or do it while my dad was here," Amy said.

Brett, 28, is scheduled to return to Iraq in February.

Family's birthday bond

FL BELLEVUE — It's hard to forget a birthday in the Dover family — everyone was born on Nov. 26.

One Friday, Kimberly Dover turned 31, husband Billy turned 35 and their twins, Angelica and Derrick, celebrated their first birthday.

The parents said they were surprised to have any children, let alone two on their birthday. After years of infertility, they were about to give up when one last treatment proved effective.

The proud parents are looking forward to more birthdays. "I can't wait till they go to Walt Disney World," Kimberly said.

Ceiling crash

IL SPRINGFIELD — At least four people were injured when netting across the open atrium of a six-story government building collapsed and tore down sections that crashed through the ceiling of a room below.

The netting was weighed down by snow and ice, the result of a storm that blanketed the Midwest on Wednesday.

The falling stone left a gash about 60 feet long in the atrium's floor, said Dave DeFrances, chief of operations for the Springfield Fire Department.

Officials said four people were taken to a hospital with injuries ranging from scrapes to a head laceration. The injuries did not appear to be life-threatening.

Those cats can travel

NC CHARLOTTE — Wild Thing, Georgia, Sparky and Boots aren't very old, but they sure get around.

The feline foursome arrived with a parts shipment that Twin-Star Construction in Charlotte had ordered from Georgia. The kittens somehow found their way into the box and survived without food or water.

The kittens were so young that they hadn't opened their eyes, said Cathy Thomas, who works for the construction company. She took

them home and began feeding them with an eyedropper; her twin sons picked the names.

Each cat requires a 2-ounce bottle every three hours.

Disastrous survey

KY LEXINGTON — An automated phone survey on disaster preparedness turned into its own mini-disaster.

The survey was designed to run from 4 to 9 p.m. last Monday and Tuesday. Instead, a malfunction Monday night caused the computerized calling program to dial numbers until 4 or 5 a.m. Tuesday.

Patricia Dugger, who heads the city's emergency management division, apologized for the error but noted most residents haven't complained — they just said they were too sleepy to do the survey.

Avtec, a Minneapolis-based firm that developed the calling system, is trying to determine what went awry.

City to repeal Indian law

MA BOSTON — Mayor Tom Menino took the first step toward repealing a 329-year-old law that orders the arrest of all American Indians who enter the city.

The law has not been enforced for centuries, but tribes have been trying to win a repeal for years.

The City Council passed a resolution in favor of repeal last year; the final action must be taken by the Legislature. Menino filed a petition to set the legislative process in motion.

"It's time to make things right," he said in a statement the day before Thanksgiving.

The colonial Legislature approved the statute Oct. 13, 1675, during King Philip's War, one of the bloodiest conflicts in American history — a series of guerrilla battles between British colonists and tribes.

Volunteer arrested

TX HOUSTON — A Special Olympics volunteer with a suburban Houston school district has been arrested on charges that he sexually assaulted developmentally disabled teenage boys.

Richard Craig Hopper, 39, was charged with four counts of sexual assault of a child after his Monday arrest. He was in the Harris County Jail in Houston late Tuesday in lieu of bonds totaling \$400,000, officials said.

Hopper, a former substitute teacher for the Galena Park Independent School District, is scheduled to appear in court Wednesday.

Injection results in death

WA SEATTLE — A woman who underwent surgery for a brain aneurysm died after she was mistakenly injected with an antiseptic solution instead of a harmless X-ray marker dye, hospital officials say.

Mary McCClinton, 69, had the operation Nov. 4 at Virginia Mason Medical Center and died Tuesday. At the end of McCClinton's operation, a technician was supposed to inject the dye into a leg artery. Instead, the syringe was filled with chlorhexidine, a highly toxic solution used to clean the skin, hospital quality chief Dr. Robert Caplan said.

Stories and photos from wire reports

AFFRTS Television Schedule

Updated sports listings are available on the first Scoreboard page in the Sports section or AFN's Web site at <http://myaffr.dodmedia.osd.mil>

Starting November 28, 2004

| (AFN-FAMILY) | (AFN-MOVIE) | (AFN-EUROPE) | (AFN-KOREA) | (AFN-NEWS) | (AFN-SPORTS) | (SPECTRUM) | (AFN-PACIFIC) |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 9:00 House of Mouse 9:30 Animaniacs 10:00 Ed, Edd n Eddy 10:30 Fillmore (E) | 11:00 Out There "Isabelle" 11:30 Planet's Fiercest Animals 12:00 In the Mix "You Unplugged" 12:30 Happy Days 13:00 Movie "H-E Double Hockey Stick" (1996, Fantasy) Tyler Lajth, Will Friedle. 13:30 14:00 14:30 Movie *** "The Lion King II: Simba's Pride" (1998) Voices of Mathew Broderick. 15:00 15:30 16:00 Asahi! Real Monsters 16:30 17:00 SpongeBob SquarePants 17:30 Rugrats First bits 18:00 18:30 19:00 Kralia's Creature Lions on African savanna (E) 19:30 20:00 America's Funniest Home Videos 20:30 21:00 Glimmer Girls 21:30 22:00 American Dreams "The Y-10 Split" 22:30 23:00 The Cosby Show "Hilman" 23:30 Home Improvement 23:30 Touched by an Angel "Full Moon" | 11:00 Movie *** "Mrs. Doubtfire" (1993, Comedy) Robin Williams, Sally Field. An anthropomorphic beast as a nanny to be with his family. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Lilo & Stitch" (2002, Comedy) Voices of David Ogden Stiers, Tia Carrere. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Lilo & Stitch" (2002, Comedy) Voices of David Ogden Stiers, Tia Carrere. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Lilo & Stitch" (2002, Comedy) Voices of David Ogden Stiers, Tia Carrere. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Lilo & Stitch" (2002, Comedy) Voices of David Ogden Stiers, Tia Carrere. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Lilo & Stitch" (2002, Comedy) Voices of David Ogden Stiers, Tia Carrere. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 |
| MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2004 | | | | | | | |
| 00:00 SpongeBob SquarePants 0:30 Rugrats 1:00 Kralia's Creature Lions on African savanna 1:30 America's Funniest Home Videos 2:00 2:30 Glimmer Girls 3:00 3:30 4:00 American Dreams "The Y-10 Split" 4:30 5:00 Sesame Street (E) 5:30 6:00 Barney & Friends (E) 6:30 Blue's Clues 7:00 Dragon Tales (E) 7:30 Bob the Builder 8:00 The Wiggles 8:30 Dora the Explorer 9:00 Stanley 9:30 Sawto-Snakes Cat 10:00 Arthur (E) 10:30 Between the Lions "Help" 11:00 Sawto-Snakes Cat 11:30 Stanley Stanley studies frogs. 12:00 Dora the Explorer 12:30 The Wiggles 13:00 Bob the Builder 13:30 Dragon Tales (E) 14:00 Blue's Clues Bob paints. 14:30 Barney & Friends (E) 15:00 Funniest Home Videos 15:30 16:00 Pokémon 16:30 Yu-Gi-Oh! (Part 3 of 3) 17:00 Asahi! Real Monsters 17:30 Rocket Power 18:00 SpongeBob SquarePants 18:30 Rugrats 19:00 Little McQuire 19:30 Taina Making the Band 20:00 Smallville "Zero" 20:30 21:00 Boy Meets World 21:30 Boy Meets World 22:00 The Cosby Show 22:30 Home Improvement 23:00 Touched by an Angel "When the Wind" | 11:00 Movie *** "Bat 21" (1988) Gene Hackman. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Bat 21" (1988) Gene Hackman. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Bat 21" (1988) Gene Hackman. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Bat 21" (1988) Gene Hackman. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Bat 21" (1988) Gene Hackman. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Bat 21" (1988) Gene Hackman. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 | 11:00 Movie *** "Bat 21" (1988) Gene Hackman. 11:30 12:00 12:30 13:00 13:30 14:00 14:30 15:00 15:30 16:00 16:30 17:00 17:30 18:00 18:30 19:00 19:30 20:00 20:30 21:00 21:30 22:00 22:30 23:00 23:30 |

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Walter Scott's **Personality** PARADE

Want the facts? Opinions? Truth? Write Walter Scott, Box 5001, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163-5001. Full name will be used unless otherwise requested. Volume of mail makes personal replies impossible.

Q My boyfriend started smoking, citing many stars who smoke. Doesn't it bother anyone in Hollywood that they still glamorize this deadly habit? — Denise Worley, Camden, N.J.

A Yes. "I vowed to try to stop Hollywood from glamorizing tobacco if I survived throat cancer," says screenwriter Joe Eszterhas (Basic Instinct), 59, who had 80 percent of his larynx removed in 2001. "Sadly, many stars still smoke and use cigarettes as acting props." Visit www.parade.com for more on Eszterhas and his public-service campaign.

Q I thought Jack Nicholson had met his match in Lara Flynn Boyle, but then they split up. Do you think a woman will ever tame him? — Paul Grubb, Newark, Del.

A We doubt it. Jack's troubled childhood (until his 30s, he thought his mother was his sister) didn't prepare him for normal relationships with women. Still, he's not exactly the love-'em-and-leave-'em type. Says Edward Douglas (a pseudonym), author of the new bio "Jack: The Great Seducer": "Nicholson provides homes for many of his ex-girlfriends and his children, but he never wants to live with them."



KRT

Jack Nicholson is still defying women's attempts to tame him.

Q A trail-looking Fidel Castro recently took a spill. What happens when he eventually falls from power? — Don Fleischer, Boca Raton, Fla.

A In a word: chaos. None of the contending parties — homegrown Communists, Miami Cubans, Cubans in Spain, and the U.S. government — is likely to have the leverage to immediately shape a new government in a post-Castro Cuba. In the long run, however, we expect Washington to exert the most influence and create a Cuba that's friendlier to the United States.

Q Your items on who made the most guest appearances on "The Tonight Show" made me curious: Who has been David Letterman's most frequent guest? — Brian T., Sacramento, Calif.

A Dave says Tony Randall, who died in

May at 84, held that distinction, with more than 100 appearances. Incidentally, the actor's obituary claimed he also was Johnny Carson's most frequent "Tonight Show" guest, rather than our reported pretenders-to-the-title, Steve Martin and the late Rodney Dangerfield.

Kasey Kahne, NASCAR cutie.

AP

Q Is Kasey Kahne, my favorite NASCAR driver, dating anyone? — April Burchett, Medina, Ohio

A "I'm a single man," Kasey, 24, told us, deftly swerving around your question. But our sources say the NASCAR phenom, who won more than \$4 million this year, had a girlfriend with him the races. There, the female rivalry over Kasey was as brutal as the competition on the track.



FOX

Don't be fooled: Behind the friendly smiles of Simon Cowell, above, of "American Idol," and Omarosa Manigault-Stallworth, right, of "The Apprentice," lie cold hearts of evil. We know because TV always tells the truth.

Q Who do you think would win a verbal battle: Omarosa Manigault-Stallworth, the scheming former "Apprentice" contestant, or outspoken "American Idol" judge Simon Cowell? — Dana Jones, Jupiter, Fla.

A We put our money on Simon, because he's much nastier than Omarosa — and that's saying a lot.

Q Nick Lachey

is at least as talented as his bimbo wife, Jessica Simpson. Why doesn't he get more attention? — Karen B., Venice, Calif.

A Nick, 31, soon

may rival Jessica, 24, for attention. The former boy-band heartthrob is juggling offers, including deals from both Fox and ABC. He flexed his acting muscles with recent gigs on "Charmed" and "Hope & Faith" and landed a role in "The Hard Easy," a film with David Boreanaz. This shift in focus from Jessica to Nick contributed to rumors that their marriage is on the rocks.



KRT

Mr. Jessica Simpson should soon have his time in the limelight.

Q What's become of Carole Simpson of "ABC World News Tonight Sunday," who was replaced by Terry Moran? — Linda Scott, Virginia Beach, Va.

A After 15 years in that anchor slot, Simpson, 63, wanted a change. Last year, she became head of ABC News' initiative in public schools. So far, she's spoken to students in 15 cities. Her message: To be an informed citizen, read newspapers and watch the news.



KRT

Q A while back, I read about a "Little Women" musical coming to Broadway. What happened to it? — Jon Graham, Salem, Mass.

A "The producers were waiting to assemble the perfect cast," says singer Maureen McGovern, 55, who'll play Marmee, the mother of the high-spirited March sisters. "Sutton Foster is amazing. She seems to be channeling Jo straight out of the book." Foster is a Tony winner for "Thoroughly Modern Millie." Previews begin Dec. 7 on Broadway.

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So it's OK to be a deserter?

So let me see here. Charles Jenkins deserts his Army post in South Korea in 1965, then goes on to live and work in North Korea, a member of the so-called "Axis of Evil." In 1980 he marries a Japanese woman who was abducted by the North Koreans in 1978 and proceeds to have a family. In 2002, his wife and daughters are allowed to return to their home country of Japan. She tries to persuade him to come to Japan but he is hesitant because he is afraid of being prosecuted by the United States for desertion and, while being reunited with his family in Indonesia, he expresses the desire to return to North Korea.

He eventually gives in to his wife and comes to Japan. He then turns himself in to Army officials and is put back in uniform and paid his Army salary while awaiting disposition of his case. For about two months the family is living in Army housing, being paid Army salary, and being treated like celebrities (the post exchange was closed one day when I went to shop because they were in there shopping). He then pleads guilty to desertion and is sentenced to 30 days' confinement and a bad-conduct discharge. Thirty days?

He is currently serving his sentence while his family is still living in base housing. Then Japan's chief Cabinet secretary, Hiroyuki Hosoda, says: "We'd like to support the family so they can live in this country after Jenkins' custody is completed," referring to the financial assistance that family will receive (probably about 300,000 yen a month) to help them live in Japan.

I have compassion for his wife and daughters, but am I missing something here? I have served honorably for nearly 22 years. This guy deserted the Army and will be getting money each month that I will be getting once I honorably retire from the military. Something is definitely seriously wrong here.

I say send him back to North Korea and let the family stay in Japan.

Chief Petty Officer

Mathew Matunas

Atsugi Naval Air Facility, Japan

Tell us what you think

Stars and Stripes welcomes your comments on editorials and columns that are published in the newspaper, and values letters on topics of importance in the lives of our readers. All letters must be signed, and must include the writer's address or base and telephone number. Please limit all letters to 300 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, taste and clarity.

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Kerry crowd got comeuppance

As a student of politics (and strong George W. Bush supporter), I was extremely pleased with the outcome of the election.

President Bush was re-elected despite the heinous behavior of the media and left-wing nuts (i.e. Michael Moore). He received the largest number of votes in American presidential history. He also won by more than 3,000,000 votes despite the daily barrage from the pro-John Kerry media.

The Republicans also added to their majority in both the House and the Senate. Each Bush-bashing October surprise from the Democrats and their willing accomplices in the media was snuffed out by the American people. The people accepted them for what they were, attacks that had no basis in fact. The liberals just didn't seem to understand that the vast majority of the American people are not stupid. We can and did see through the phonyism of Kerry and John Edwards.

Kerry's many years in the Senate exposed him for what he truly is: a diarch, flip-flopping liberal. Although it is hard to believe, Kerry received a more liberal rating than Sen. Ted Kennedy. Amazing!

I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Moore, George Soros, Terry

McAuliffe, Dan Rafter, Al Franken, The New York Times, James Carville, Bruce Springsteen and, of course, the Dixie Chicks. Thanks for the help. We couldn't have done it without them.

Mike Appell
Okinaiva City, Okinaiva

Hats off to infantrymen

In response to "Earning the CIB" (letter, Nov. 11), the writer says: "Just remember though you're still a bunch of pogs (wink)." Well, you know what? I am proud to be a pog. I have nothing but respect for the infantry guys who go out and endure all kinds of unforgiving conditions while I sit in my heated equipment shelter on my eight- or 12-hour shift reading my book. Even if I was to be assigned some infantrylike duty while serving here in Iraq, I wouldn't ask for a Combat Infantryman Badge. What I go through on a daily basis and what the guys who do it for years at a time go through, the difference cannot be made up in a few months of talking about the streets.

I think about those guys who volunteer to go out there on a daily basis, and tip my hat to them. So guys, when you get back to base and want to call home or shoot some e-mails to family and friends so they don't worry too much about you, I'll be here waiting for you.

Spc. Thomas Loder

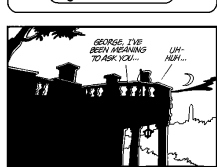
Camp Fallujah, Iraq

Health care rights urged

Active-duty military members should have the right to choose their own health care. I don't think it's fair that there are choices within the TriCare system, but military members have no say in which one they will be enrolled into. I think that this would not only serve as a morale booster, but it would improve the apportionment of doctors to ailing personnel. In essence, healthy, good-feeling personnel is the key to mission accomplishment, front line or rear, especially since the two are interdependent.

Kyung Trotter

Messau, Germany



OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other stateside syndicates.

Brawl smacks of new era The Democrat and Chronicle, Rochester, N.Y.

National Basketball Association commissioner David Stern was true to his name — and beyond — last weekend when he handed out long and expensive suspensions for players involved in the ugly brawl near the end of the Detroit Pistons-Indiana Pacers game [Nov. 19] in Detroit.

Stern didn't hesitate and he didn't hold back, and the punishments he meted out were fully in line with the offenses.

But the players weren't the only villains. What about the fan who dumped his beer on [Pacer Ron] Artest as he sparred with Piston Ben Wallace? The Pistons have the tape and the team should see to it that that person is identified and prosecuted....

The owners should follow Stern's lead. Get tough. Punish fan misconduct with arrest or permanent ejection. Stop or restrict alcohol sales. Put respect for the game first, above money and winning.

Problem beyond filibusters St. Louis Post-Dispatch

One of the most important decisions that President Bush and the new Congress face is who and how to put judges on the federal bench, including the U.S. Supreme Court....

For the past four years, Democrats have used the filibuster, a nuclear weapon of Senate opposition, to block some of Mr. Bush's extreme judicial nominees. Now Republicans are talking about their own "nuclear response," a vote on the use of the filibuster in judicial nominations.

Both sides should step back from the brink. The Democrats have overused the filibuster, but Republicans invite gridlock if they eliminate this powerful procedural tool....

If everyone were true to their word, we might avoid debilitating filibusters. If Mr. Bush appoints highly competent judges who won't read their personal views into the Constitution, and if the Senate avoids litmus tests, we might yet avoid mutually assured destruction.

Bury tactics with Arafat Williamsport (Pa.) Sun-Gazette

The death watch on Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat, ripe as it may have been with geopolitical drama, was in many respects a political and media campaign. It would be hard to imagine, in this post-9/11 world, a famous terrorist being welcomed in world capitals, feted with the Nobel Peace Prize, allowed to abscond with hundreds of millions (and perhaps billions) of dollars in foreign aid, never prosecuted for his crimes and spending his last days under the protection of a Western government. Yet that is what happened to Arafat in his last years and his last days....

The only good thing to say about Arafat is that he no longer stands the planet and restrains whatever Palestinian organization exists from building a civil society based upon the rule of law.

Yet Arafat has so poisoned the political atmosphere among Palestinians that the next generation of leaders, if they can outwit Arafat's terrorist successors, will have no easy task before them. But at least it will be possible.

Immigration plan is lacking San Francisco Chronicle

Because they live clandestine lives, it's easy to forget that most illegal immigrants



work for U.S. employers and are effectively living permanently in the United States.

[This month] President Bush said he was at last willing to engage with Congress on how to bring illegal immigrants out of society's shadows. The problem is that his legalization program doesn't attack the crux of the problem, and it may actually enlarge the current illegal-immigrant population.

Bush is pushing a guest-worker program. Employers would have to certify they could not find U.S. workers to fill vacant positions. Immigrant workers would then be able to apply for three-year visas. After that, they would have to return to their home country if they were no longer needed....

The Bush plan might attract a new class of immigrant, who in the past was not willing to make a life-threatening voyage across the U.S. Mexico border (in addition to paying a "croyote" to guide them across). These presumably would be the migrants without roots in the United States who Bush envisions would return to their home countries. But it's a well-established axiom in immigration circles that "there is nothing more permanent than a temporary-visa program." Once here, it's likely many recent migrants would stay on, even after their visas expired....

Many U.S. businesses will object at the requirement that they first have to advertise to find U.S. workers before signing up someone from the guest-worker roster. Thus the plan may be used to attract immigrant advocates will reject it because it contains no clear pathway to citizenship and employers will reject it because of its complexity.... Bush should broaden his plan.... The president may also need to use some of his post-election "political capital" to bring along GOP conservatives who oppose any deal on immigration.

'MNF gives us the skinny Chicago Tribune

Finally! The ABC television network, not to be outdone by rival CBS in shimmeying over the fuzzy line of decorum and daring the Federal Communications Commission to slap it with a big fine, has pulled off its own Janet Jackson-like caper. In a segment that aired [Nov. 15] on "Monday Night Football" before the Dallas-Philadelphia game, Eagles wide receiver Terrell Owens and actress Nicole Sheridan of the ABC hit "Desperate Housewives" shared a seductive moment....

Let's see. Didn't NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue thunder about the league taking more control over telecasts after the Jackson bared-breast incident in the last Super

Bowl? As if sex appeal and the NFL had never consorted? Please. Sex has been part of the NFL at least since the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders first pranced onto the field in their world-famous skimpy outfits decades ago and the NFL sells sex and violence and the occasional touchdown....

We wearily rise to suggest, once again, that such incidents do not warrant the scorched-earth tactics that the FCC has perfected.... [n]or should they be an excuse to embolden Congress to dramatically increase fines. That's just a shortcut to more censorship on television....

Did ABC and the NFL blunder by not knowing their audience? Seems they may have known their audience too well.

Goss repeating mistakes The Daytona Beach (Fla.) News-Journal

CIA Director Porter Goss is repeating history at the nation's most important intelligence agency. Given the CIA's recent history, that's bad news for the agency, worse news for national security....

Two weeks before President Bush launched the Iraq invasion in March 2003, then-CIA Director George Tenet declared to Bush that there was a "slam-dunk case" that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction....

Tenet had made his "slam-dunk" assessment on evidence from other branches of Bush's administration knew to be questionable, dubious, even false.... The war was launched anyway. Bush trusted Tenet. And Bush, it is no leap to say, had wanted his war with Iraq since his first year in office, possibly his first weeks. That no weapons of mass destruction were ever found became yet another catastrophic failure of intelligence on the CIA's part, and of judgment on the president's part....

In the end, the evidence was too overwhelming to keep Tenet and save the CIA from an overhaul....

Yet Bush immediately provided for insulation by other means with his appointment of Goss, a political rather than an intelligence appointment.... a politically driven tenure rather than a reforming one.

Darfur visit no panacea The (Baltimore) Sun

The U.N. Security Council's journey to Nairobi, [Kenya, this month] culminated with a significant commitment between the government of Sudan and rebel leaders in the south to resolve the country's 21-year civil

war by year's end. But the two sides made the same pledge last year....

On a more pressing issue, the council's meeting.... offered no indication that the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region would end soon.

Traveling to Africa may have been an extraordinary gesture.... [b]ut the only response that truly matters is the action taken by the Sudanese government....

It has the power to rein in the Arab militaries.... The grim prospect is that the situation in Darfur will continue as a humanitarian crisis indefinitely. The reality is that the people of Darfur will remain refugees until the government and the rebels in the south enter power-sharing agreement and a new Sudan emerges....

No one OK'd blank check The Daily News, Longview, Wash.

A post-election Associated Press poll found that two out of three voters prefer that President Bush and Congress balance the budget rather than reduce taxes further.... [F]ollowing congressional approval of a big increase in the nation's debt limit, some on Wall Street seemed to second that advice....

By not reimposing "pay as you go" budget rules that limit tax cuts and spending increases, Congress had effectively given the administration a blank check to continue running big deficits, Stephen S. Roach, chief economist at Morgan Stanley, told Washington Post writer Jonathan Weisman. "An open-ended license for this kind of fiscal irresponsibility is a recipe for disaster," Roach said....

Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan has issued the same warning repeatedly over the past year....

Now, of course, the federal government is back in the red, as deeply in the red as it's ever been. The past fiscal year's deficit amounted to a record \$413 billion. To accommodate this fiscal irresponsibility, Congress [this month] had to increase the federal debt limit by \$80 billion, to \$8.8 trillion....

The only thing that prevents this heavy debt from rupturing this nation's economy is foreign investment. Congress' failure to demonstrate any resolve with respect to controlling its spending imperils investor confidence....

That's risky, because the moment foreign investors conclude that the United States is incapable of exercising fiscal discipline, they'll begin to dump their U.S. holdings. If and when that happens, interest rates are expected to soar, denying the economy the capital it needs to grow....

YOUR MONEY

Preparing for the first step of a big step

When shopping for an engagement ring, good planning is key

BY RUDY ANTOMPIETRI
AND MITCH SWANDA

Special to Stars and Stripes

More than a few servicemembers have returned home to their significant others with marriage on their minds. And, traditionally, before popping the question comes choosing the ring, which can be a major financial commitment. Let's face it—ring shopping can be an intimidating experience for a first-timer. But armed with some basic knowledge about jewelry and a good financial plan, you can make a confident purchase.

There are three major stages in the ring-buying process—finding the right ring, deciding how to pay for it and protecting your investment. Here is an overview of the essentials.

Choose ring carefully

Choosing the right ring is a personal decision that comes from the heart, but you also should use your head to make sure you're getting a quality product at a price within your means. Consider the following factors:

■ **The budget.** While that full-carat solitaire diamond may be a perfect fit for your bride-to-be, it also may be too big for your budget. The military lifestyle but is to spend an amount equal to one to two months' pay on an engagement ring, but first consider your other financial obligations. Being knee-deep in debt before the wedding bells ring can put unnecessary stress on a young marriage. It's best to seek a balance between glitter and good sense. Also keep in mind that diamonds don't have to be forever. Some jewelers offer diamond upgrade programs, allowing



Courtesy of USAA

Many servicemembers will return home this season with marriage on their mind. When shopping for a ring, be armed with a budget and some knowledge of jewelry.

owners to "trade in" a smaller diamond for a larger stone down the road.

■ **The four Cs.** Carat (the weight of the diamond), cut (the shape of the stone), color (the amount of color in the stone) and clarity (the number of flaws inside or on the surface of the diamond) are the keys to unlocking the mystery of the diamond selection process. These attributes are standard measures of a diamond's quality, making it easier for non-experts to identify a valuable jewel. A diamond that ranks high

in the four Cs is considered to be rarer, and thus more expensive. This explains why a smaller, near-perfect diamond may cost more than a large but flawed one. Plan to devote some time to learn more about the four Cs. You'll be happy you did.

■ **The ring setting.** Keep in mind that your fiancée may have a preference as to what the setting looks like. While yellow gold is most traditional, platinum, white gold and two-tone are all popular options at varying price ranges.

■ **The jeweler.** Not all jewelers are the same, so it's important to work with an organization you trust that offers the service you need. To the benefit of deployed servicemembers, some diamond retailers now provide comprehensive gem selection and quality service over the Internet. Whether shopping in cyberspace or at the mall, look for a retailer with an on-site gemologist that helps select the highest quality merchandise. Be sure the jeweler will provide a certified appraisal for the diamond you choose, and a satisfaction guarantee.

Don't rush the payment

After weeks or even months of searching, you've finally found the perfect ring to make her dreams come true. Even if you're comfortable with the price, how you pay for the ring is another decision that shouldn't be taken lightly.

■ **Cash.** If you've been saving up for that special purchase, your efforts to avoid debt are commendable. But plunking down a wad of cash for a ring may not be wise because it provides less protection than other forms of payment. Having a third-party record of the transaction will help you resolve any potential misunderstandings.

■ **Credit card.** Though relying on credit isn't always the best decision, purchasing jewelry is one example of a good time to use a credit card. The card creates a paper trail that allows the purchaser to deny payment if any wrongdoing is discovered. And today, lower interest rates available to those with good credit make using a credit card an even more attractive option. As always, it's best to pay off the balance as soon as possible to avoid paying much more for the ring than it actually was.

■ **Personal loan.** Whether it's financing offered through the jeweler or a loan you secure from your own bank, this is another option with built-in safety features. If taking this route, don't sign on the dotted line until you've shopped around and understood the terms of the loan, and how the interest charges affect the total cost of the ring.

SEE RING ON PAGE 31

Education, career can help spouses find 'bliss'

"Susie Besaw, from the book *'The Savvy Sailor's Spouse,'* is new to the military lifestyle but is eager to learn more about how to manage her family and her new lifestyle through the monthly Family Readiness Group meetings of her husband Jake's new command.

The next Family Readiness Group (FRG) meeting was about organizing and improving your career through education. We had two speakers: Carol from the FPSC and Bob from the Navy College. But before we heard from our speakers, we went through the FRG's committee reports. The most interesting committee report was from our Morale, Welfare and Recreation committee chair, Pat Barnett.

Pat told us her committee was helping to register several families with newborns for the Navy Relief's "Budget for Baby" class and Layette program. The Layette program, run entirely by Navy Relief volunteers, was designed to help new and prospec-

tive parents learn about the impact that a new baby may have on the family financial situation. Through a program of preventive education, Pat told us Navy Relief teaches sailors and their families about variations in pay and increased expenses; common consumer pressures targeted to new parents; and entitlements available through both government and private sources. Pat also mentioned the Layette, also known as a Junior Seabag, is issued to any eligible recipient of any child who has recently had a baby or whose child will be born within six months. It consists of a coordinated set of bedding and clothing, a baby book, and a handmade item, such as a sweater set, Afghan or quilt, all packed in a tote or duffel bag. Layettes are given to recipients after they attend a "Budget for Baby" class or complete an individual budget session with a society case-worker.

Money U.



Carolyn Nelson

ively, our president, then announced our speakers, Carol and Bob.

"Thank you, Evelyn," Carol said, as she and Bob walked to the front of the room. "I'm Carol Young, spouse employment coordinator at the FPSC, and this is Bob Reymond from the Navy College Office. Tonight we are going to talk about education for military spouses and how it can better your career opportunities."

"For the purpose of tonight's presentation, I'd think of school as a combination of both gaining skills and personal growth."

"In my 15 years at the Fleet and Family Support Center, I've seen thousands of spouses—all looking for their bliss."

"Bliss?" Evelyn asked. There was light chatter in the crowd.

"Yes, bliss," Carol replied, "or when you've found a need you enjoy filling every day. I believe most people can fill many needs

well, but only one of them would help them wake up every morning looking forward to filling the need they've chosen," Carol replied. "For the past 15 years I've been waking up looking forward to helping Navy spouses. I would say I've found my bliss."

"But what if you've found your bliss, but it doesn't pay enough to cover your bills?" someone asked.

"Try to decrease your bills without sacrificing your quality-of-life, if possible," Carol replied. "Sometimes it's not easy. If you need help dealing with your bills, then you can talk to one of our financial counselors at the FPSC or talk to a Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society case worker. If you lower your monthly expenses and you still can't cover everything, then you need to find a need that earns more pay. More pay usually requires more skills and more skills mean talking to Bob at Navy College. I'll let Bob take it from here," Carol said.

"Thank you, Carol, everyone," Bob said in his soothing, low voice. "I work at the local Navy College Office and want to spend

a few minutes telling you what we do at Navy College.

"The Navy College has offices in 62 major shore installations around the world. These form the backbone of the Navy College program. The Navy College consists of a network of professional education services specialists, education technicians, and guidance counselors. These professionals counsel and advise Navy members and their families on all matters relating to academic programs and tuition assistance. They also administer all on-base education programs. Some specific examples of how we help include:

■ Analyzing and defining your education goals and capabilities. Reviewing your previous college work and helping you apply.

■ Selecting courses and programs you will need to succeed. Helping you enter a suitable college, university or training school.

■ Finding ways to help you earn credit-by-examination.

SEE SPOUSES ON PAGE 31

YOUR MONEY

In-laws' will worries

Q: All I want for Christmas is for my in-laws to make their estate plan.

A: I'm not greedy. I don't want their money, their property or their not-so-small business. What I really want is freedom from the fear that my husband—who is involved in the family business—and I will be forced to deal with the inevitable confusion, hassles and unnecessary expenses that come when people don't bother to plan.

We've tried to bring up this subject through them a few times, but they always brush us off by telling they'll do something about it later. My husband also has siblings, which further complicates matters even though we can't be involved in the business. How can we get their parents to act?

A: People have plenty of reasons to avoid estate planning. Confronting our own mortality isn't exactly fun, and good estate-planning attorneys aren't cheap.

But people who don't bother to create a will or living trust run the risk that the final, lasting impression they will leave is that they didn't care enough about their loved ones to spare them the "confusion, hassles and unnecessary expenses" you rightly foresee.

Each state has rules about who gets when someone dies intestate, or without a will. Those rules can work for people who don't have much and don't care who gets what little they have. But the rules can be disastrous for people of means, like your in-laws. The state may decide that your company should go in equal shares to your husband and his siblings, for example—even if the siblings have shown no interest in or aptitude for the business and your husband has been running it

single-handedly for decades.

Or the company could get stuck in probate, the court process that typically follows death, for months or years, making it difficult to run the business. In some states, including California, probate costs can eat up 3 percent or more of the gross estate—an expense that's well worth planning to avoid.

Finally, there is the issue of estate taxes, which are still with us even though they are being phased out under current law (they will be back in force in 2011 unless Congress acts to prevent that). Again, a little planning now could significantly reduce the costs that your in-laws' estate incurs later.

Because the direct approach hasn't worked so far, you might consider restarting the discussion by focusing on a somewhat "softer" issue. Mention that you and your husband have drawn up durable powers of attorney for health care that name someone to make decisions for you if you should become incapacitated. Ask your in-laws whom they would want to nominate as decision maker under similar circumstances.

If that discussion goes well, you—or better yet, your husband—can broach the topic of a more complete estate plan. Emphasize your well-founded fears that the business they worked so hard to build could be decimated by their demise.

Liz Plawton Weston is the author of "Your Credit Score: How to Fix, Improve and Protect the 3-Digit Number That Shapes Your Financial Future." Questions for Money Talk can be submitted via her Web site, <http://www.lizweston.com>, although she regrets that she cannot respond personally to queries.

Money Talk



Liz Plawton Weston

Ring: Buying the right one

RING, FROM PAGE 30

The benefits of attractive financing incentives—such as zero percent interest for as much as 12 months—from some jewelers may be a better deal than outside loans when the total costs are figured. But be warned that some such financing deals may impose high interest rates or accrued interest charges on borrowers who don't pay off the note completely in the interest-free time period.

Peace of mind

A diamond ring may be one of the most valuable items you own that's frighteningly easy to lose. Many a heart has been broken by rings sliding down the bathtub drain or disappearing on the beach. While the sentimental value may be gone forever, having the ring covered by insurance can relieve the financial loss.

Homeowners and renters insur-

ance policies may provide some protection for fire damage or theft, but the coverage is limited (typically up to \$1,000) and will not reimburse the owner if the ring is lost. A personal articles floater is a great way to ensure the ring will be fully covered. "Floater" have no deductible, and usually cover lost items.

While you're working with your insurance company to insure the ring, it can be a good opportunity to ask how your other insurances might change as you begin married life.

Planning a proposal is an exciting time, marking the first step toward a new life as a married couple. By approaching the ring-buying process with knowledge and prudence, you'll set a strong precedent for many more financial decisions to come.

Rudy Antomietti, a graduate gemologist, is director of USAA Gemological Institute, a national jewelry and financial planner practitioner with USAA.

Spouses: When making goals, 'plan backward'

SPOUSES, FROM PAGE 30

"Navy College offices also can help guide you to courses—offered both on and off base—that are needed to complete a high school diploma by passing a GED examination. Finally, we help find places you can study for a technical or occupational certificate; improve your academic skills in reading, math and English; or help you earn a college degree. Are there any questions?"

"What's the best way to earn a college degree?" Shelly West, our special projects person, asked. "Make a goal and plan backward," Bob replied. "To be successful, your goals must be realis-

tic, clearly defined, and measurable. You also need an action plan to achieve them. It definitely helps to write your goals and action plan down."

Copies of Ralph Nelson's books—"The Navy Sailor" and "The Navy Naval Officer"—can be purchased by writing to: Master Plan Inc., 500 N. Washington St., P.O. Box 10071, Rockville, MD 20849 or online at www.savvyonline.com. This article is written and the book is sold with the understanding that neither the author nor Stars and Stripes are professional financial advisers. If you need advice, please seek professional assistance. The author specifically disclaims any liability, loss or risk—personal or otherwise—included as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of using or applying any of the information contained in this article or the book. E-mail for feedback is: finance@starsstripes.osd.mil

| FRIDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|-------|-------|-----------|--|--|
| INDEXES | | | | | | | | | |
| | 52-week | Low | High | Net | % | YTD | 52-week | | |
| | Vol | Vol | Vol | Chg | Chg | Chg | Vol | | |
| Dow Jones Industrial | 10,513.31 | 10,259.57 | 10,513.31 | +1.50 | +0.01 | +2.11 | 10,513.31 | | |
| S&P 500 | 1,263.41 | 1,243.46 | 1,263.41 | +0.40 | +0.03 | +1.21 | 1,263.41 | | |
| NASDAQ | 2,454.42 | 2,404.25 | 2,454.42 | +2.25 | +0.09 | +2.26 | 2,454.42 | | |
| NYSE Composite | 7,042.22 | 5,942.32 | 7,042.22 | +36.34 | +0.52 | +1.63 | 7,042.22 | | |
| NASDAQ-100 | 1,986.26 | 1,926.26 | 1,986.26 | +14.74 | +0.74 | +2.84 | 1,986.26 | | |
| Nikkei 225 | 15,358.22 | 15,258.22 | 15,358.22 | +5.7 | +0.04 | +0.27 | 15,358.22 | | |
| DAX | 11,846.22 | 11,035.22 | 11,846.22 | +11.00 | +0.09 | +1.16 | 11,846.22 | | |
| FTSE 100 | 5,462.22 | 5,329.22 | 5,462.22 | +4.48 | +0.08 | +1.25 | 5,462.22 | | |
| Hong Kong | 6,920.22 | 6,516.22 | 6,920.22 | +1.66 | +0.02 | +0.33 | 6,920.22 | | |
| Shanghai | 11,643.22 | 10,998.22 | 11,643.22 | +14.67 | +0.13 | +0.24 | 11,643.22 | | |

| MOST ACTIVE (51 OR MORE) | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------|-------|-------|----------|--------|-------|-------|----------|--------|
| Name | Vol | Net | Chg | Name | Vol | Net | Chg | Name | Vol |
| Pfizer | 13,224 | +2.18 | +0.01 | Merck | 28,577 | +2.21 | +0.01 | Merck | 28,577 |
| Amgen | 10,118 | +1.38 | +0.01 | Amgen | 10,118 | +1.38 | +0.01 | Amgen | 10,118 |
| Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 |
| Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 |
| Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 |
| Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 |
| Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 |
| Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 |
| Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 | +1.01 | +0.01 | Novartis | 12,951 |

| KEY DEFENSE STOCKS | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-----|-------|-------|--------|-----|
| Name | Vol | Net | Chg | Name | Vol | Net | Chg | Name | Vol |
| Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 |
| Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 |
| Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 |
| Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 |
| Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 |
| Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 |
| Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 |
| Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 |
| Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 | 65.16 | +2.18 | Boeing | 28 |

| KEY MUTUAL FUNDS | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| Name | Vol | Net | Chg | Name | Vol | Net | Chg | Name | Vol |
| Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 |
| Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 |
| Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 |
| Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 |
| Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 |
| Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 |
| Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 |
| Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 |
| Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 | +0.12 | +0.12 | Fidelity Investor | 34.78 |

EXCHANGE RATES

| Military rates | | | |
|---|--------------|--|--|
| Euro (Nov. 28) | \$1,362.00 | | |
| British pound (Nov. 28) | \$1,944.00 | | |
| Japanese yen (Nov. 28) | 105.00 | | |
| Commercial rates | | | |
| Bahrain (Dinar) | 0.3768 | | |
| British pound | \$1,995.00 | | |
| Canada (Dollar) | 1.1718 | | |
| Denmark (Krone) | \$6.02 | | |
| Egypt (Pound) | \$1,125.00 | | |
| Euro | \$1,329.00 | | |
| Hong Kong (Dollar) | \$7.7221 | | |
| Hong Kong (Dollar) | \$7.7221 | | |
| Israel (Shekel) | \$3.9873 | | |
| Japan (Yen) | 109.56 | | |
| Kuwait (Dinar) | 0.2781 | | |
| Norway (Krone) | 1.3906 | | |
| Philippines (Peso) | \$6.15 | | |
| Saudi Arabia (Riyal) | \$2.75 | | |
| Singapore (Dollar) | 1.0600 | | |
| South Korea (Won) | \$1,049.00 | | |
| Switzerland (Franc) | 1.1902 | | |
| Thailand (Baht) | \$1,425.7100 | | |
| Turkey (Lira) | 1.4257100 | | |
| (Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance or the nearest U.S. military installation.) | | | |
| Netherlands and the United Kingdom | 0.6786 | | |
| United Kingdom | 0.6786 | | |
| United Kingdom | 0.6786 | | |
| United Kingdom | 0.6786 | | |
| United Kingdom | 0.6786 | | |

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| Gold | \$439.30 | | |
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| 3-month bill | 2.20 | | |
| 3-month T-bill | 2.20 | | |
| 3-month T-bill | 2.20 | | |
| 3-month T-bill | 2.20 | | |
| 3-month T-bill | 2.20 | | |
| 3-month T-bill | 2.20 | | |
| 3-month T-bill | 2.20 | | |
| 3-month T-bill | 2.20 | | |
| 3-month T-bill | 2.20 | | |

Cents and Sensibility

Money tip of the day

Office holiday party

Many employees are excited about their office holiday party, according to a survey by Quill, an office supply firm based in Lincolnville, Ill.

Most, 72 percent, said they expect the company will spend about the same for the party as in 2003. The survey involved 65 executive, office manager and administrative workers.

Sunday Horoscope

It's a lazy morning, and energy is scattered, but that's not to say all those fragmented strands of effort aren't going to good use. We're not always lucky enough to see the results of our actions until much, much later in our lives. But you can be sure that every activity matters. Handle correspondence and finances this evening.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(November 28). Love lights your way this year; a promise is fulfilled in the next four weeks. Consolidate your resources, and prepare for big changes. An entrepreneurial project is featured in December. Perfect people start to take notice. Your love life is a hot item in January. You must make a choice that affects how you'll spend the rest of the year.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). A charming infant terrible, you're an indispensable part of your group. In for you, everyone would keep marching to the drum of perfect, boring stasis. If you're accused of being a troublemaker, grin, and say, "That's me."

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Your penetrating sincerity will pierce the bubble of a problem, deflating it over the course of the next few days. This power can also be used to conquer your lingering anxieties about events on the horizon.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). This is not a status quo kind of day, unless, of course, you've determined to settle for it. Challenge yourself. What would make you want to sing a song of praise or emote a triumphant shout?

CANCER (June 22-July 22). An aloof approach to love works wonders. Being clingy is trying anything. Spend time with a romantic interest because you want to, not because you need to. Ask to be delivered from a battle that was never yours to fight.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). It's natural for you to use your courage to protect others or further a cause you believe in but do not originate. Believe in your own worthiness. It

may as well be you! Advance, and achieve — retreat, and watch someone else achieve.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).

You don't need a formal ritual to divorce yourself from a part of your life that has become untenable. Let it go the way you discharge any other heavy burden — open your heart, and drop it where you stand.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).

Having a day off is an opportunity for proactive thinking and planning. Action taken on an administrative matter is the way to good fortune, but it's not going to happen unless you write it down on your calendar and really do it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).

You know better than to act for a reason to reach out. Your self-esteem is anything but fragile now. You can bare your soul with no fear of how others will react (since it will have zero effect on the way you see yourself).

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).

With only 10 percent more compassion for yourself, you will understand what motivates you. With 10 percent more compassion for others, you'll know their intentions and accept their gifts as loving gestures.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).

If you take things literally, you'll be frustrated. The day is ripe with complexity, symbolism and hidden meaning. Look deeply into some other, beyond what can be captured on video and into the story behind the story.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).

Conflict is scary, not just for you but for many — OK, it's scarier for you. Though you're not out to hurt feelings, into every relationship a little confrontation must fall — otherwise, someone is not being real.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

You define friendship in broad terms and are therefore able to love more friends. Embrace those fearful, imperfect human beings you've chosen to make a part of your world.

Creators Syndicate

Biting through the pain

Where does the phrase "bite the bullet" come from? My guess is the military, though why anyone would actually bite a bullet is beyond me.

You are half right in supposing that "bite the bullet" (and the earlier "bite on the bullet") comes from the military. The phrase originated in military medical practices of the 19th century.

During the American Civil War, unsanitary conditions and poorly trained field surgeons were just two reasons that amputation was the most commonly performed operation for a wounded or gangrenous arm or leg. In

the days before antiseptics, it was easier to remove the infected part than to stop the infection.

But the field surgeons didn't have anesthesia, either — perhaps just a bit of whiskey, as in old westerns. To help the patient endure the pain of amputation, they would give him a bullet or some other hard object to bite down on in much the way you might clench your fist while enduring a painful injection or tooth extraction.

This column was prepared by the editors of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition. Readers may send questions to Merriam-Webster's Wordwatch, P.O. Box 261, 47 Federal St., Springfield, Mass. 01102.

New approach may be needed to motivate unresponsive son

Dear Abby: My 9-year-old stepson, "Bryan," is turning into a feminine little boy. He knows all about girly products and what is on sale at the mall. Bryan's mother treats him like a baby. All they do at their house is sit around and watch TV. She has no friends, and neither does Bryan. He does not get involved with anything, he is exactly like his mother.

When Bryan is at our house, we try to get him involved in activities, but the boy is lazy and doesn't want to participate. Then he tells his mother that his father yells at him. My husband does yell, but only to get Bryan off his butt to do something. The result is Bryan wants to spend very little time with us because of his mother's constant bawling.

At our house, he has chores and we make him help with things.

At her house, she does everything for him. How can we make Bryan less feminine and involve him with friends and activities?

— "Wicked" Stepmom in Pennsylvania

Dear Stepmom: It's a parent's job to help a child be the best

that he (or she) can be. That does not mean the father remaking the child in his own image, and that may be what the boy is resisting. Bryan is not particularly "masculine," and he's not interested in what you and your husband are trying to force him into. Your insistence on trying to make him fit your mold may be what is driving him away.

Instead of yelling at him to get him "off his butt," if you need his help with chores, say exactly that. ("Bryan, I need your help with something.") And since he isn't interested in the usual "boy things,"

perhaps it's time you and your husband expose the boy to sports, music, dance, to see what does turn him on.

If none of the above does the trick, then some professional counseling for the three of you to establish a healthier level of communication is in order. You may be able to help Bryan become more social, but don't count on changing the core of who he is.

Dear Abby: My wedding is scheduled for the fall of next year. My parents are paying for the wedding. My groom is my grandmother. She has never shown any interest in me and

doesn't know me from a hole in the wall. She has been verbally abusive to my father throughout his entire life. She even told him once that he was a "mistake" and she didn't want to have him.

I do not want this woman at my wedding, but I know my father wants her there. My dad feels that since I am her only granddaughter, she should be present. I have nothing but anger toward her because of the way she has treated my father and her indifference toward me.

Who should decide whether the mean old bag will attend? Since my parents are paying, does my father get the final say? Oh, did I mention that my mother does not want Granny there, either? How should this be handled?

— Hates Grannies in Maryland

Dear H.G.: My advice is to be a lady and be gracious.

Your father has his reasons for wanting his mother to come to the wedding. Please find it in your heart to grant his wish without giving him further heartburn. On your wedding day, you will be so busy with your wedding party and your husband, you'll hardly even know the woman is there.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 6940, Los Angeles CA 90069. Letters can be sent to Abby on the internet at <http://www.uspspress.com/dearabby> or by e-mail to dearabby@uspspress.com.

Husband should tell chronic flirt that it's time to back off

Dear Annie: My 50-year-old husband has fallen victim to a flirt.

"Georgia" is 20 years younger and a member of our wine-tasting group. She follows my husband everywhere, even moves in on him. She is always touching him to his side, laughing, touching and hugging him. I once caught her showing him a picture of the two of them that she keeps in her wallet. (It was a group shot, and she cut out all the others.) Georgia often tells my husband that he's good-looking and what a cute couple they'd make. But he's only to get personal information about my husband. Surprisingly, she is engaged to another member of our group, but there is no wedding in sight.

My husband is flattered, of course, but insists that Georgia sees him as a father figure. Well, she obviously has a father, thank you. Her behavior really bothers me, and she seems oblivious to my comments that her attentions are not welcome. I trust my dear husband, but I don't trust her. He thinks Georgia's flirting is harmless and that I am jealous

for no reason. To his credit, he tries to avoid Georgia, so as not to upset me. I no longer enjoy these gatherings, but cannot stop attending because we are officers of the group. How do I deal with Miss Hot Pants?

— No Name, Please
Dear No Name: Your husband is the one who should tell Georgia to stop. His tolerance of her flirting is the same as encouragement, and he needs to be more forceful about telling her to leave him alone.

If Georgia continues stalking your husband, you might consider quitting the group, regardless of your status there.

Dear Annie: Every year, my company gives its employees donation cards to a charity, and we're instructed to put the cards in with our donations. The trouble is, if employees do not choose to contribute, our department heads lean on us. They want to claim 100 percent participation. Each year I have given a small donation.

I have co-workers who have been upbraided for not giving

enough.

We've been told to give one hour's pay per month. This may not sound like much, but there have been times when money was so tight that I was grateful that the extra few dollars meant having gas money for the week.

I give when I can, to my church and to the charities of my choice.

I resent that my company tries to intimidate me into giving what I cannot afford to a charity I do not support. What should I tell my boss if he attempts to lean on me? Do I have any legal recourse? Please help.

— Not Feeling Charitable

Dear Not Charitable: Being "leaned on" is not illegal unless your job is threatened if you don't contribute. Simply give what you can and say "sorry" when you can't. If you feel unduly pressured, however, it might help to talk to your supervisor and say so. In fact, if several employees do this together, perhaps the boss will tone down the demands.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marty Sugar, frequent editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniemailbox@aol.com, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5771 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045. Creators Syndicate

Annie's Mailbox



RELIGION



AP photos

Right: Craig Pierce serves a customer at a Subway restaurant after assisting with a funeral at the True Bethel Baptist Church, located inside the same building as the restaurant in Buffalo, N.Y., this month. Pierce, a minister at the church, manages the restaurant. **Above:** The restaurant is part of the church's job training program that also includes a bookstore, silkscreen company and cleaning company.



The body, the blood and a Subway sub

BY CAROLYN THOMPSON
The Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y.—At True Bethel Baptist Church, the Rev. Darius Pridgen is happy to serve the Word. He's also pretty quick to serve a sub.

The pastor of the respected church in an impoverished, inner-city neighborhood has installed a Subway sandwich shop inside the building, nudging out part of the choir stand.

The choir's adjusted. The restaurant's booming. Pridgen is amazed and amused.

But mostly the energetic pastor is happy to accomplish his goal of giving young people in his community a place to work — or better, someplace to learn to work.

"I expect none of them to be here more than a year, that's my goal," said Pridgen, sitting in his church office after presiding over the funeral of a young murder victim.

There are too many such funerals here on Buffalo's east side, where businesses

Buffalo minister teaches job skills at restaurant in inner-city church

are more likely to close than open. Pridgen estimates he buries two young, black victims of street violence every month. It is violence, he thinks, born of a hopelessness that enfolds the struggling Rust Belt city.

"Visually, audibly, I think this adds to hope," Pridgen said, the aroma of baking bread filling the air as employees worked on an assembly line of meat, cheese, pickles, onions and peppers.

Since opening in September, the fast-food franchise has placed consistently among the top performers in the 80-store region, at one point sending an embarrassed Pridgen begging for bread at other Subways to get through a crazy rush.

"It's turned into a bigger operation than we ever imagined," he said. "In weeks."

But making money isn't the point, he added: "Money just follows mission."

The church started a work-skills program for young people two years ago but it fizzled without jobs for its graduates. That's when the church, which is housed inside a former supermarket and attracts about 2,000 people each week, opened its own businesses: a small bookstore, silkscreen company and cleaning company that contracts with an adjacent charter school.

For Subway officials, the church location — its first — posed no problems.

"If there's room and if it fits within the zoning board requirements, we're happy," said Les Winograd, a spokesman for the Milford, Conn.-based chain.

The city provided about \$10,000 in small business grants, Common Council member Antoine Thompson said.

Pridgen recognizes the drug dealers who come into Subway by the way their money is folded. He believes having them see people who look like them working a legitimate job, even owning a restaurant, can instill hope.

Pridgen recruited a 20-year-old man, Craig Pierce, to manage the shop and he keeps his own Subway uniform in his office closet with his pastoral robes, regularly donning it to mop floors and handle stock.

He sees the need for job training on the employment applications that cross his desk, some with missing or incorrect information.

"What usually happens is the best get everything — the smartest, the brightest," Pridgen said. "What we have the opportunity here to do is to help those who might not have been given the educational tools or the job-training tools."

Muslim rappers combine beats, beliefs

BY ANNA JOHNSON
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — When David Kelly — aka "Capital D" — raps, he doesn't follow the mainstream mantra of women, cars and jewelry.

Instead, the Chicago rapper uses his rhymes to dish out praise for Allah, criticize the war in Iraq and blast corporate America.

Kelly is among a new group of Muslim rap artists gaining popularity among Muslim-Americans looking for entertainment that reflects both their mainstream tastes and religious beliefs.

"Muslims in the United States are not going away. They're part of the culture, but they're not creating their own culture," Kelly said. "I try to show them that you can be creative, artistic, happy and still be Muslim."

Islam is not new to rap. The Nation of Islam and other nontraditional sects like the "Five Percenters" have influenced hip-hop through lyrics and images since the late 1970s. And Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has been mentioned and sampled in many raps.

But this new wave of Muslim-influenced music seeks to convey messages and images more in line with orthodox Islam.

"The music says I'm still an American, and I still want my culture. But I want to refine it so I can incorporate Islam into it, too," said Mike Shapiro, 23, who created the Web site www.muslimhiphop.com earlier this year. "Muslims in America and Muslim youths really need this. They don't have anyone to relate to."

Kelly recently performed before a crowd of about 80 people on Chicago's South Side as part of a monthly event organized by the Chicago-based Inner-City Muslim Action Network.

Audience members sipped tea and smoothies as Kelly performed several songs from his latest album, "Insomnia." For religious reasons, Kelly performs only in venues that don't serve alcohol when he is on stage.

"His stuff is really powerful and moving," Sabah Khan, 22, said after Kelly's performance. "I think it's important to support music that's positive. People say they listen to music on the radio because they say they like the beat. But you can have a beat and the song can have a positive message."

Kelly said his music hasn't always been politically charged.

Before converting to Islam four years ago, Kelly — who was raised Catholic — said his music lacked a seriousness and discipline.

"Now, I have a different agenda," he said. "If I am going to put an album out, I have to say something."

That kind of message-driven music also is at the heart of Remarkable Current, an Oakland, Calif.-based record label that features several hip-hop artists. Though listeners may not realize the artists are Muslim when they first hear the music, they will notice the positive messages, said founder Anas Canon.

"I try to push an art out there that is loving and positive and a reflection of our spirituality," Canon said.

Kelly said he knows it will take orthodox American Muslims a while to carve their own path in the hip-hop world, but he's optimistic.

"Muslims are starting to take the culture they listen to and creating their own culture in a very American way," Kelly said.

"Islam hip-hop is very young in the process, and we'll have to bump heads for a while, but we'll make it."



AP

Muslim rapper David Kelly, aka "Capital D," performs for an attentive audience at the Spoken Word Cafe in Chicago. Kelly is among a new group of Muslim hip-hop artists gaining popularity among Muslim-Americans.

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7 a.m.—Golf: Skins Game, Day 1 (cd).

AFN-Sports, 5 a.m.—College football: Grambling vs. Southern (cd).
1 p.m.—NBA: Denver at Dallas.
3 p.m.—College basketball: Great Alaska shootout championship game.

AFN-Atlantic and Radio, 7 p.m.—NFL: Jacksonville at Tennessee.
AFN-Pacific, 7 p.m.—NFL: Philadelphia at New England.
AFN-Sports, 7 p.m.—NFL: Tampa Bucs at New England.
AFN-Pacific, 10 p.m.—NFL: New Orleans at Atlanta.

Monday

AFN-Atlantic, 1 a.m.—NFL: Tennessee at Houston (cd).
AFN-Pacific, 1 a.m.—NFL: Oakland at Denver.
AFN-Sports, 9:30 a.m.—Golf: Skins Game, Day 2 (cd).

AFN-Pacific, 9:30 a.m.—College football: Cincinnati at Louisville (cd).
AFN-Pacific, 6:30 p.m.—Golf: Shian Kora Championship, final round (cd).

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| San Diego | 7 | 3 | 708 | 212 | 162 |
| Buffalo | 6 | 4 | 600 | 180 | 173 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|------|-----|-----|
| Jacksonville | 6 | 4 | 0 | .600 | 166 | 181 |
| Houston | 4 | 6 | 0 | .400 | 198 | 239 |
| Tennessee | 4 | 6 | 0 | .400 | 186 | 212 |
| North | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|------------|---|---|---|------|-----|-----|
| Pittsburgh | 9 | 1 | 0 | .900 | 240 | 181 |
| Baltimore | 7 | 3 | 0 | .700 | 204 | 140 |
| Cincinnati | 4 | 6 | 0 | .400 | 183 | 198 |
| Cleveland | 3 | 7 | 0 | .300 | 177 | 208 |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|------|-----|-----|
| Denver | 7 | 3 | 0 | .700 | 233 | 167 |
| San Diego | 7 | 3 | 0 | .700 | 285 | 190 |
| Oakland | 3 | 7 | 0 | .300 | 182 | 270 |
| Kansas City | 3 | 7 | 0 | .300 | 276 | 265 |

NATIONAL

| | W | L | T | Pct | PF | PA |
|--------------|---|---|---|------|-----|-----|
| Philadelphia | 9 | 1 | 0 | .900 | 266 | 158 |
| N.Y. Giants | 5 | 5 | 0 | .500 | 196 | 172 |
| Dallas | 4 | 7 | 0 | .364 | 193 | 289 |
| Washington | 3 | 7 | 0 | .300 | 131 | 178 |

| | South | | West | |
|-------------|-------|---|------|--------------|
| Atlanta | 8 | 2 | 0 | .800 208 194 |
| Tampa Bay | 4 | 6 | 0 | .400 192 182 |
| New Orleans | 4 | 6 | 0 | .400 211 288 |
| Carolina | 3 | 7 | 0 | .300 196 222 |

| | North | | | | | |
|-----------|-------|---|---|------|-----|-----|
| Green Bay | 6 | 4 | 0 | .600 | 256 | 230 |
| Minnesota | 6 | 4 | 0 | .600 | 264 | 246 |
| Detroit | 4 | 7 | 0 | .364 | 192 | 257 |
| Chicago | 4 | 7 | 0 | .364 | 172 | 221 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|------|---|---|------|-----|-----|
| | West | | | | | |
| Seattle | 6 | 4 | 0 | .600 | 230 | 185 |
| St. Louis | 5 | 5 | 0 | .500 | 220 | 254 |
| Arizona | 4 | 6 | 0 | .400 | 177 | 214 |

Thursday's games

Indianapolis @ Detroit
 Dallas @ Chicago 7
 Tennessee at Houston
 Pittsburgh at Pittsburgh
 Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants
 Cincinnati @ Cincinnati
 San Diego at Kansas City
 Baltimore at Baltimore
 Jacksonville at Minnesota
 Pittsburgh at Jacksonville
 Buffalo at Seattle
 N.Y. Jets at Arizona
 Miami at San Francisco
 Carolina at Denver
 Oakland at Denver

Monday's game

St. Louis at Green Bay
 Arizona at Detroit
 Buffalo at New York
 Houston at N.Y. Jets
 Tampa Bay at Tampa Bay
 Tennessee at Indianapolis
 Cincinnati at Baltimore
 San Francisco at St. Louis
 Atlanta at Tampa Bay
 Baltimore at New Orleans
 New England at Cleveland
 San Diego @ San Diego
 Kansas City at Oakland
 Pittsburgh at Jacksonville
 Green Bay at Philadelphia
 Dallas at Seattle

Monday, Dec. 6

College football

AP Top 25 rated

How the top 25 teams in The Associated Press' college football poll fared Friday:

No. 1 Southern Cal. (10-0) did not play. Next vs. Notre Dame, Saturday.
 No. 2 Oklahoma (11-0) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 3 Auburn (11-0) did not play. Next vs. No. 1 Tennessee, SEC championship, Saturday, Dec. 4.

No. 4 Cincinnati (9-2) did not play. Next at Southern Miss, Saturday, Dec. 4.

No. 5 Florida State (11-0) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 6 Texas (10-1) beat No. 27 Texas A&M 26-13, Sept. 27, TBA.

No. 7 Georgia (10-2) beat No. 19 Cincinnati, Saturday, Dec. 4.

No. 8 Arizona (10-2) did not play. Next vs. Georgia Tech, Saturday.

No. 9 Alabama (10-2) did not play. Next vs. No. 11 Virginia Tech, Saturday, Dec. 4.

No. 10 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 11 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 12 Boston College (9-2) did not play. Next vs. Syracuse, Saturday, Dec. 4.

No. 13 Arizona State (9-2) lost to Arizona 34-27, Sept. 26, TBA.

No. 14 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 15 Texas Tech (10-0) did not play. Next vs. No. 16 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 16 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 17 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 18 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 19 Cincinnati (9-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 20 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 21 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 22 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 23 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 24 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 25 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 26 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 27 Texas A&M (26-13) beat No. 6 Texas 26-13, Sept. 27, TBA.

No. 28 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 29 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 30 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 31 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 32 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 33 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 34 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 35 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 36 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 37 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 38 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 39 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 40 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 41 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

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No. 44 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 45 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 46 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

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No. 49 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 50 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 51 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 52 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 53 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 54 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 55 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 56 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 57 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 58 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 59 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 60 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 61 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 62 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 63 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 64 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 65 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 66 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 67 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 68 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

No. 69 Virginia Tech (8-2) did not play. Next vs. TCU, Big 12 championship, Saturday, Dec. 10.

AP Women's Top 25 ranked

Friday

1. Tennessee (3-0) did not play. Next vs. Texas Tech, Big 12, Saturday, Dec. 4.

2. Texas Tech (3-0) beat No. 22 Maryland 64-51, Nov. 26, 11:00 a.m., CBS.

3. Georgia (3-0) beat Idaho 77-55, Nov. 26, 11:00 a.m., CBS.

4. UCLA (3-0) beat No. 10 UCLA, Saturday, Dec. 4.

5. California (3-0) beat No. 10 UCLA, Saturday, Dec. 4.

6. Duke (4-1) beat Stephen's Austin 84-29, Nov. 26, 11:00 a.m., CBS.

7. Kansas (3-0) beat Texas A&M-Corpus Christi 73-44, Nov. 26, 11:00 a.m., CBS.

8. Houston (3-0) beat Illinois State, Saturday, Dec. 4.

9. Minnesota (3-1) did not play. Next at Creighton, Sunday, Dec. 5.

10. Northwestern (3-0) did not play. Next at Missouri, Saturday, Dec. 4.

11. Oklahoma (3-0) beat Akron 84-40, Nov. 26, 11:00 a.m., CBS.

12. Pennsylvania (2-1) lost to No. 22 64-51, Nov. 26, 11:00 a.m., CBS.

13. Louisiana Tech (3-0) did not play. Next vs. Arkansas, Saturday, Dec. 4.

14. Villanova (2-0) did not play. Next vs. No. 5 North Carolina at Las Vegas, Saturday, Dec. 4.

15. Kansas (3-0) did not play. Next at BYU, Saturday, Dec. 4.

Friday's women's scores

Saturday

American U. 74, Marist 63, 0T.
 Arizona St. 73, Seton Hall 61.
 Boston College 74, Wake Forest 61.
 St. Francis, Pa. 61, Bucknell 61.

1. Tennessee (3-0) beat No. 22 Maryland 64-51, Nov. 26, 11:00 a.m., CBS.

2. Texas Tech (3-0) beat No. 22 Maryland 64-51, Nov. 26, 11:00 a.m., CBS.

3. Georgia (3-0) beat Idaho 77-55, Nov. 26, 11:00 a.m., CBS.

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Friday's women's scores

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 Arizona St. 73, Seton Hall 61.
 Boston College 74, Wake Forest 61.
 St. Francis, Pa. 61, Bucknell 61.

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3. Georgia (3-0) beat Idaho 77-55, Nov. 26, 11:00 a.m., CBS.

4. UCLA (3-0) beat No. 10 UCLA, Saturday, Dec. 4.

Long Island Tournament

Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

First Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Second Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Third Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Fourth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Fifth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Sixth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Seventh Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Eighth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Ninth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Tenth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Eleventh Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Twelfth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Thirteenth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Fourteenth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Fifteenth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Sixteenth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Seventeenth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Eighteenth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Nineteenth Round
 Long Island U.S. 54, Eastern Shore 49.
 Oregon 79, Miami 77.

Falcons out to prove they belong among elite

BY PAUL NEWBERRY

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Atlanta Falcons have a record that puts them among the NFL's elite.

Even so, they're viewed as something of an interloper among teams such as the New England Patriots and Philadelphia Eagles. The Patriots are the defending Super Bowl champions. The Eagles are generally considered the best team in the NFC.

Then there's the Falcons, still trying to convince skeptics they're worthy of being mentioned in the same breath.

"We think those teams are at the same level we are," cornerback Kevin Mathis said. "But a lot of people aren't giving us the respect that we think we deserve."

Indeed, the Falcons (8-2) have to prove they're not the latest one-year wonder in the NFL. This team won only five games in 2003 — granted, quarterback Michael Vick was out much of the season — and has never even managed consecutive winning seasons in its 39-year history.

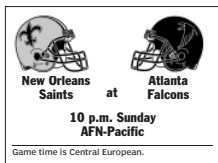
Atlanta can take a major step toward winning a third division title Sunday by beating the New Orleans Saints (4-6). The Falcons have a commanding four-game lead in the NFC South and are poised to raise another banner to the Georgia Dome roof.

"We know we can play with any team in this league," defensive tackle Chad Lavalais said. "Reporters make their decisions, and the fans say this team or that team is the best. But this is football. This isn't basketball or baseball, where it's a best-of-seven. In one game, we can beat anybody."

The Falcons haven't earned as many style points as, say, Indianapolis. Atlanta had to thwart a 2-point conversion to beat woeful San Francisco, failed to score a touchdown in a victory over Arizona, and last week had to hold on for dear life in a 14-10 victory over the New York Giants.

First-year coach Jim Mora couldn't care less if this team appears to be winning ugly. To him, every victory is a thing of beauty.

"It shows true resolve that we've been able to hold on," he said. "You'd like to go



for 14 points every quarter, but it just doesn't happen against the defenses we're playing now."

The Saints are a team in disarray, coming off a 34-13 home loss to Denver that drew a harsh assessment from owner Tom Benson. He called it the worst performance he'd seen and compared his players to a high school team.

Even so, New Orleans is still right in the thick of the playoff race. Thanks to parity, the Saints are only one game out of an NFC wild-card berth.

"We are not down and out," quarterback Aaron Brooks insisted. "Our heart is still beating a little."

It won't be for long if the Saints keep playing like they did a week ago. They got off to another slow start, trailing 14-0 after Denver had run only four offensive plays.

New Orleans has scored only 10 first-quarter points this season, all in victory over the 49ers the second week of the season.

"If you look at all the teams that have a chance to be in the playoffs, we're all the same," coach Jim Haslett said. "We're all inconsistent. The team that puts together three or four wins in a row is going to be the team that makes the playoffs."

If the Saints can pull things together, the schedule certainly looks favorable. They still have two games left against Atlanta, but their remaining opponents all have losing records.

"This thing is not over yet," Haslett insisted.

Vick is coming off the fifth 100-yard rush-



Atlanta Falcons running back Warrick Dunn (28) makes a move on New York Giants linebackers Nick Griesen (54) and Carlos Emmons during a 14-10 victory last weekend.

ing game of his career, breaking Billy Kilmer's league record for a quarterback.

For all the wear and tear on his body, No. 7 feels amazingly strong.

"I've been bumped around a little bit and bruised up a little bit, but it's nothing I've had to go to the treatment room for," Vick said. "I've been real good through 10 games, and let's just hope the next six will be the same way."

He's learned to limit some of the punishment by going down when the defense closes in.

"I'm scared to slide," Vick said. "So I

took the other approach. I just fall to the ground and get in position where they can't spear me with their helmets. When I fall, I'm right up on their legs, so the only thing they can do is tag me."

Vick's passing statistics aren't real gaudy — only nine touchdown passes and 165 yards per game through the air — but that's OK with Mora. He's more impressed with the quarterback's 20-10 record as a starter.

"Mike wins," Mora said. "You look at his record, it's not always pretty in terms of statistics and quarterback rating. You might need to throw those things out when you talk about Mike Vick. He just wins."

Titans, Texans fighting to avoid AFC South cellar

BY JOEL ANDERSON

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Steve McNair and Drew Bennett waited until the final 17 seconds of last year's game in Houston to break the streak of nearly 71,000 Texans fans.

The old Houston football team had again tornmented the fans of the new Houston team.

When the Tennessee Titans (4-6) and the Texans meet again Sunday, a sellout crowd will eagerly anticipate another chance to see their estranged team leave Houston with a defeat. The Texans (4-6) won the first matchup between the teams more than a month ago, but the chance to complete the sweep at home would indeed be a sweet moment for the NFL's youngest franchise.

The game will also have more than bragging rights at stake, because the loser will drop into sole possession of last place in the AFC South.

"It would be big to be able to go

Tennessee Titans at Houston Texans

1 a.m. Monday AFN-Atlantic

Game time is Central European.

and get two from them in the same year," Texans quarterback David Carr said. "I know our crowd is always fired up when we play against the old Texans. They are going to be extra excited."

The victory over the Titans in Nashville on Oct. 17 was one of the last highlights of the Texans' rapidly deteriorating season.

Carr threw for 266 yards and a touchdown and the Texans intercepted four of McNair's passes in the franchise's first victory over the team it replaced in Houston. The victory was also the Texans' third in four games, igniting talk around town about a possible playoff run.

That talk probably won't be

heard again around Houston for a while.

Houston has since dropped three straight, including a last-second 16-13 defeat to Green Bay last Sunday. The Texans have reverted to their expansion ways, ranking 30th in the NFL in defense and doing so badly on offense their fans started booing in the loss to the Packers.

"The thing is, we never talked about the playoffs before," Texans cornerback Aaron Glenn said. "We're in a situation now where our backs are against the wall. That's not saying anything about the playoffs. We just need to get victories."

Meanwhile, McNair and the Titans have slowly turned around their season since that deflating loss to the Texans.

On Sunday, McNair started for the first time since Oct. 24 and finished a game for the first time since the Texans' loss, leading the Titans past Jacksonville 18-15 by engineering a drive for the winning score with 3:31 left.

The victory was the Titans' second in three games.

"It's definitely more upbeat, and we've got more confidence behind us," Tennessee offensive tackle Fred Miller said. "We've got Steve back and he's going to play very well."

The Titans beat the Jaguars despite playing without six starters, including running back Chris Brown (turf toe), left tackle Brad Hopkins (broken right hand) and both safeties. Coach Jeff Fisher announced Monday he had lost two more players to season-ending injuries.

Cornerback Andre Woolfolk, who needed surgery to repair a dislocated right wrist, and rookie safety Justin Sandy, who broke his left ankle 48 hours after being promoted from the practice squad, won't be available to help a secondary that lost safety Tank Williams to a torn ACL last week. Left cornerback Samari Rolle tweaked his left knee in the third quarter last Sunday and had to leave the game, and Scott McGar-

rahan, the replacement for Williams, was hurt on the next series.

"It is going to be a challenge for us, but we will have enough out there," Fisher said of his banged-up secondary. "I can't tell you where they are going to line up and play right now. I may not for competitive reasons, but we will have enough out there to play."

The Texans surely won't have much pity for the Titans, especially considering the amount of grief they've caused them over the past two years.

A Houston victory would certainly go a long way in erasing those painful memories of McNair's winning 23-yard touchdown pass to Bennett on fourth-and-10 in last year's game in Houston.

"It would be the major focus of their 2004 highlight tape if they could sweep us," Titans defensive end Carlos Hall said. "Everyone on their team feels that they should have won the last game they played down there. They feel we stole that game away."

Playoff push pits former teammates against each other

Jaguars coach Del Rio matched against Tice, energized Vikings

BY DAVE CAMPBELL

The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — As teammates with the Minnesota Vikings in the early 1990s, Mike Tice and Jack Del Rio became friends.

Both were tough-guy players who joined the coaching ranks after they retired, and the two men are now trying to lead their teams to playoff spots as this season enters the home stretch.

Tice's Vikings (6-4) host Del Rio's Jacksonville Jaguars (6-4) Sunday at the Metrodome and, as Tice said this week, you always want to beat your pals.

"We're both competitive guys," Del Rio said. "He doesn't care if it's tidbits, winks, checkers, cards or whatever. He wants to win. I agree."

Tice played 14 seasons in the NFL as a blocking tight end, mostly with Seattle, and finished his career in Minnesota. That's when he met Del Rio, a middle linebacker who joined the Vikings in 1992 after playing for three other teams.

They didn't talk about being head coaches someday, but the groundwork for their current jobs was laid in those final seasons.

"I think playing the game for a long time helps you more than people think," Tice said. "It gives you a good sense of how the players feel. I think if you haven't played the game, sometimes it's hard for you to get a read on your players. ... You know how they feel when they lose. You know how they feel when they win. You know reality. You know what to ask of them — how far you can push the buttons."

Both Tice, in his third year as head coach, and Del Rio, in his second, have each influenced their players enough to the point the clubs seem to show some of the coach's personality. Both are well-liked in the locker room.

But while Tice and Del Rio have each guided noticeable improvements since taking over weak teams, they still have plenty to prove as head coaches in this league.

The Vikings, energized by a 22-19 comeback victory over Detroit last week, are optimistic about the rest of the season. Tied with Green Bay atop the NFC North, three of Minnesota's final five games are against teams with losing records. All-Pro wide receiver Randy Moss is expected



Minnesota Vikings running back Moe Williams, right, congratulates wide receiver Nate Burleson in the end zone after a touchdown reception during the Vikings' 22-19 victory over the Detroit Lions last week.

back against the Jaguars after a hamstring injury kept him from catching a pass in the last five games — and playing the last three.

"I know he's going to have an explosive game when he steps out there on the field," said Nate Burleson, the primary target for quarterback Daunte Culpepper during Moss' absence.

The Vikings fell behind early each of the last four weeks, leading to three losses, and thus have failed to establish their usually productive running game. Michael Bennett, Oronio Smith and whoever else carries the ball figures to have a difficult time because Jacksonville has allowed just two 100-yard rushers in its last 25 games. Pro Bowl center Matt Birk, plagued by a painful abdominal injury, is out for about a month.

Moss, however, always opens up things for others with his dangerous ability to go deep — even if it's not yet 100 percent.

"Certainly it's not a secret that he commands a lot of attention," Del Rio said.

This game marks the return of an important offensive player on the other side, too. Quarterback Byron Leftwich, out for two games with a sprained left knee, is ready to assume control. He'll have to wear a brace, however.

"I've done some good things, and I've done some things I wish I wouldn't have done in these first 11 weeks of the season," Leftwich said. "Now it's just, 'Let's take it one game at a time and then try to find a way to win these last six.'"

Another strong game from Fred Taylor would help. He has rushed for 247 yards in his last two games, and the Vikings, until the second half last week against the Lions, struggled badly against the run.

"If you don't stop him from running," Minnesota defensive coordinator Ted Cottrell said, "oh, boy, it's a long day for you."

Boulware's season over before it ever began

The Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — Baltimore Ravens outside linebacker Peter Boulware will not play football this season, remaining on the physically unable to perform list.

The four-time Pro Bowl linebacker underwent off-season knee surgery after an injury last season.

After a grueling rehabilitation program, Boulware, 29, was on track to return until he suffered turf toe Nov. 4 in his second practice of the season.

"It's been pretty tough," Boulware said. "I would have to say these are probably two of the worst injuries I've had in my eight years playing in the NFL. I work on my knee for 10 months to get it healthy and it's back there, ready to go, and the day after I get out there to practice, my toe goes out on me."

Despite the setback left Boulware, the franchise's career sacks leader, unable to practice or maintain his conditioning.

The Ravens' pass rush has thrived without Boulware at outside linebacker. Baltimore (7-3) has 30 sacks, second in the NFL behind the Pittsburgh Steelers' 31. Terrell Suggs leads the team with eight sacks.

Bears lose Brown for year

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Veteran guard Robert Brown will undergo neck surgery and miss the remainder of the season.

Brown, an eight-time Pro Bowl selection who started 136 games for the Buffalo Bills from 1995 to 2003, signed with the Bears as a free agent. He missed Thursday's loss to the Dallas Cowboys because of the injury.

Rams release Landeta

ST. LOUIS — The St. Louis Rams made a move to shore up shaky special teams on Friday, releasing punter Sean Landeta and signing Kevin Stemke.

Landeta, 42, is in his 20th NFL season and is one of only two former NFL players still in action in the NFL. But he's 31st out of 33 punters in the NFL with a net average of 32.5 yards.

Stemke has two games of NFL experience with the Oakland Raiders in 2002.

Hall returns to Redskins

ASHBURN, Va. — Washington Redskins kicker John Hall will be back in uniform Sunday after missing five games with a groin injury.

Hall trained his groin during practice on Oct. 14. He was 7-of-9 on field-goal attempts before the injury.



7 p.m. Sunday
AFN-Atlantic, AFN-Radio

Game time is Central European.

Bledsoe, Bills due for road win in Seattle

BY TIM KORTE

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Drew Bledsoe doesn't get back to his hometown of Walla Walla, Wash., too often these days. A road game in Seattle is as close as it gets to a homecoming for the Buffalo Bills quarterback.

"It will be great to be back out there in the Northwest, to have some friends and family," Bledsoe, a former Washington State standout, said. "That'll all be pregame and postgame. We've got to focus on beating a good Seattle team."

Exactly how good? That's the subject for debate.

The Seahawks (6-4) are leading the NFC West, but they've been erratic since opening 3-0. They've been slowed by a stop-go offense, injuries to key defensive players and unreliable special teams play.

Still, coach Mike Holmgren sees the bright side. The Bills (4-6) did Seattle a huge favor last week by beating NFC West rival St. Louis, and now it's up to the Seahawks to seize control down the stretch.

"If we slog our way through wins," I'll take that," Holmgren said. "Ideally, you'd like to not make any errors. If we keep winning ballgames and just keep battling ... I still think we're capable of playing better football."

For the second straight week, the Seahawks have an issue at quarterback. Matt Hasselbeck was questionable after missing last weekend's 24-17 victory over Miami with a deep bruise above his right knee.

Trent Dilfer stepped in, completing 14 of 28 for 196 yards with one touchdown with two interceptions. He started strongly, throwing a first-quarter TD pass to Jerry Rice, but the offense stalled in the second half.

Buffalo Bills at Seattle Seahawks

10 p.m. Sunday
AFN-Sports

Game time is Central European.

Blame it on rust. It was Dilfer's first start in more than two years.

"It's not the quickness and speed," he said. "It just wasn't as clear. Maybe only a quarterback can understand that. It wasn't as crystal clear as it has been in the past, and that's from not playing."

Seattle won't have receiver Koren Robinson, sitting out the first game of a four-game suspension for violating the NFL's substance-abuse rules. Rice will start for the second straight week.

Buffalo is trying to get rolling away from home after losing its previous four road games this season. Going back to last year, Buffalo has lost 10 of 11 on the road, including six straight.

Bledsoe, in particular, has had it rough on the road, throwing 14 interceptions with seven TDs in that span.

He rebounded with three touchdown passes last week against the visiting Rams, all to tight end Mark Campbell. If it helps Bledsoe get his head straight, maybe he should pretend it's another home game.

In a sense, it is, though Bledsoe has returned to southeastern Washington only a few times over the past two years. His parents now live in Montana and most of his high school friends have left Walla Walla.

He was asked if he expects to feel like he's home again Sunday.

"I hope so. It will be a challenge," Bledsoe said. "We haven't played well as a team on the road. The Hawks defense presents a challenge. You just don't get anything easy against them. You've got to earn everything."

Myskina rallies Russia in Fed Cup finals

The Associated Press

MOSCOW — French Open champion Anastasia Myskina pulled Russia into a 1-1 tie with defending champion France in the Fed Cup final on Saturday after U.S. Open winner Svetlana Kuznetsova lost the first singles match.

Nathalie Dechy gave France a big lift in the opener of the best-of-five series by defeating Kuznetsova 3-6, 7-6 (7-4), 8-6.

Myskina then made sure Russia, bidding for its first Fed Cup title in its fifth trip to the finals, didn't entirely squander the first day, beating Moscow-born teenager Tatiana Golovin 6-4, 7-6 (7-5) at Krylatskoye Ice Palace.

Hedrick wins 1,500 skate

HEERENVEEN, Netherlands — Chad Hedrick of the United States won a 1,500-meter speedskating race Saturday with a personal-best time and moved into first place in the World Cup overall standings.

Hedrick, the reigning world champion in the 1,500, was timed in 1 minute, 47.06 seconds for his

Sports briefs

first World Cup victory this season. Simon Kuipers of the Netherlands was second in 1:47.31 and countryman Bearn Nijenhuis was third in 1:47.38.

After three of five races, Hedrick has 220 points, with Mark Tuitert of the Netherlands at 216 and Enrico Fabris of Italy at 200.

American third in Finland

KUUSAMO, Finland — Ronny Ackermann of Germany won the season-opening Nordic combined World Cup event on Saturday, with Todd Lodwick of the United States third.

Ackermann finished 29.7 seconds ahead of defending champion Hannu Manninen of Finland in the 15-kilometer freestyle cross-country skiing. Lodwick was 33.9 seconds behind Ackermann.

Japan's Daito Takahashi won the earlier ski jump portion of the competition, earning a 16-second starting advantage over Ackermann in the cross-country race.

That soon dissolved as Ackermann pulled into the lead, with Lodwick hanging on in second only to yield to Manninen's strong closing lap.

Dodd leads China Open

SHANGHAI, China — Welshman Stephen Dodd shot a 2-under 70 on Saturday to hang onto the lead after the third round of the China Open and keep alive his chances of a first-ever European Tour victory.

Dodd overcame a triple-bogey with five birdies to move to 8-under 208.

Denmark's Thomas Bjorn (68) and Soren Hansen (70) share second at 211 and Bradley Dregde of Wales-Wales at 212 after a 70.

Jimenez leads in Korea

SEOUL, South Korea — Spain's Miguel Angel Jimenez fired a 3-under 69 on Saturday to take a one-stroke lead after the third round of the Korea Golf Championship.

Jimenez, coming off a four-victory season on the European tour, had six birdies against three bo-

geys to finish at 2-under 214, one stroke ahead of American Arron Oberholser, who shot 70.

American Brian Bateman (73) and South Korea's Kebin Na (72) were at 216.

Irish star Padraig Harrington had a 76 to drop five strokes behind at 3 over.

Poutiainen wins in Aspen

ASPEN, Colo. — Finland's Tanja Poutiainen captured her second World Cup victory, charging down the hill on the second run to edge Sweden's Anja Paerson by .09 seconds in a World Cup giant slalom on Friday.

Second to Croatia's Janica Kostelic by 6 seconds after the first run, Poutiainen made up the time on the last half of her second run to finish in a two-run total of 2 minutes, 12.49 seconds.

Poutiainen had finished second to Paerson, the defending overall champion, in the World Cup season opener in Austria on Oct. 23.

Kostelic, a two-time overall champion who won three gold medals in the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics but missed last season

because of illness and injury, appeared headed to her first victory in nearly two years after a stellar first run. She couldn't keep up in the second heat, however, and dropped to third.

Pampling stays on top in Australian Open

SYDNEY, Australia — Australia's Rod Pampling got off to a rough start Saturday and finished with a 3-over-par 74, leaving him one stroke ahead of countryman Richard Green entering the last round of the 100th Australian Open.

Pampling began the third round with a four-stroke lead over Australia's Kurt Barnes after consecutive 67s, but dropped three strokes on the first five holes.

Pampling, who won The International in August for his first PGA Tour victory, was at 5-under 208 at the Australian Golf Club course, also the site of the inaugural tournament in 1904.

Green, a left-hander, was at 209 after a 67, and Barnes was another stroke behind after a 72.

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NIT title caps Wake's first week as a No. 1

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Wake Forest's first week as a No. 1 team went pretty well.

The Demon Deacons won the Preseason NIT on Friday night, five days after topping The Associated Press' poll for the first time in school history.

Justin Gray had 21 points in Wake Forest's 61-60 victory over No. 18 Arizona, while Chris Paul, his backcourt mate and the leading vote-getter on the AP pre-season All-American team, struggled with just four points on a 2-for-11 shooting.

"I felt like teams were gunning for us last season," Paul said when asked about facing opponents as a top-ranked team. "We still have a long way to go in terms of being a national powerhouse."

Cock Scip Prosser's team will play No. 5 Illinois on Wednesday night.

"We're trying to be a part of a national team, and so you have to play a national schedule," he said. "I don't know if I'll do that at infinity because it could become ad nauseum and I don't want that."

In the third-place game, Dwight Bravington scored 23 as Providence beat Michigan 72-63.

Gray, who also had 21 points in the semifinals against Providence, was selected the tournament MVP. He received five stitches over his right eye in the first half against Providence and he was kicked near the same spot against Arizona.

"I don't get wrapped up in MVPs and things like that. I'm happy for our team," Prosser said. "But he has a courage that's contagious."

Paul laughed when he was asked about Gray's injuries.

"He gets hurt all the time. I don't even look anymore because I know he's coming back in," Paul said. "He's just Justin."

The loss ended a 15-game winning streak in the Preseason NIT for Arizona (4-2), and it was the first loss in 12 games at Madison Square Garden for Wildcats coach Luke Olson, a run that started in 1973 when he was at Long Beach State.

"It's disappointing, but it isn't because our guys didn't play hard," Olson said. "It wasn't a case of our coming out and not being ready to play. I thought we played with a lot of passion."

The Demon Deacons went on a 13-2 run to go up 59-51 with 5:28 left. Arizona cut it to 61-60 with 1:26 remaining on a three-pointer by Hassan Adams, and got the ball back when Gray missed the front end of a 1-and-1 with 24 seconds left.

Arizona had one timeout left, but Olson didn't call it. Mustafa Shakur dribbled the ball at the top of the key and started his move with 7 seconds left. His jumper from about 8 feet was short.

Eric Williams made two free throws for Wake Forest with 1.2 seconds left and Arizona's chance to tie ended when Adams' turnaround three-point attempt at the buzzer bounced off the rim.

No. 13 Maryland 84, No. 25 Memphis 61: At Springfield, Mass., John Calanario had 16 points and 10 rebounds and Nik Caner-Medley had 15 points for Maryland (3-4). Rodney Carney scored 23 points for Memphis (4-2).

No. 17 N.C. State 99, Campbell 44: At Raleigh, N.C., Cameron Bennerman scored 20



Wake Forest's Justin Gray is defended by Arizona's Isaiah Fox in Friday night's game.

points in North Carolina State's fourth straight lopsided victory. Diago Aguiar scored 16 points for the Fighting Camels (1-2).

No. 19 Alabama 78, Minnesota 72: At Anchorage, Alaska, Earnest Shelton made five three-pointers and scored 29 points to lead Alabama (3-0) past Minnesota (2-1) in the semifinals of the Great Alaska Shootout. The Crimson Tide play No. 22 Washington in the championship game Saturday.

No. 21 Notre Dame 54, Charleston Southern 38: At South Bend, Ind., Chris Krumm scored 14 of his 17 points in the second half and Notre Dame (3-0) held Charleston Southern (1-2) to 16 points in the second half.

No. 22 Washington 96, Oklahoma 91: At Anchorage, Alaska, Nate Robinson scored 19 points and had eight assists, leading Washington (3-0) past Oklahoma (2-1) and into the championship of the Great Alaska Shootout.

Hayes sets the pace as Kentucky routs GSU

By Murray Evans

The Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Kentucky is promoting Chuck Hayes as an All-American candidate, using the slogan "All he does is win."

In his inimitable fashion, Hayes ensured the eighth-ranked Wildcats of yet another victory Friday night. He scored 12 of Kentucky's first 15 points to help the Wildcats breeze past Georgia State 77-59.

Hayes finished with 16 points and nine rebounds — matching Kelenna Azubuike for team highs in both categories.

It's the epitome of what a total player is all about," Kentucky coach Tubby Smith said. "You want him on the floor for everything he does."

Hayes scored six points in a 12-2 run that erased a brief Georgia State lead and put the Wildcats (3-0) ahead for good.

Kentucky's 38-23 halftime lead was constructed largely on Hayes' hands — he went 6-for-8 from the field while his teammates went a combined 6-for-20.

Hayes capped a 24-3 run to open the second half with a put-back that gave the Wildcats their biggest lead, 62-26 with 14 minutes left.

Georgia State (1-2) made nine second-half three-pointers, but the baskets came too late to make much difference, with the Panthers of the Atlantic Sun Conference never reducing the deficit to lower than 18 points.

"I don't think our guys thought the game was over," Smith said. "They changed some things and we didn't handle it right. We had a group in that just seemed to not get out and protect the three-point line."

The Panthers made 12 three-pointers — more than any Kentucky opponent last season — led by Marcus Brown, who went 4-for-5 from long range and scored 16 points. Georgia State shot 37.7 percent from the field overall.

Kentucky enjoyed a considerable size advantage and made it a point of emphasis to take the ball to the basket. As a result, the Wildcats had nine dunks and went 19-for-24 from the free-throw line. Georgia State mostly jump shots and went just 1-for-4 from the line.

"That was a huge plus for them," Georgia State coach Michael Perry said.

Kentucky won despite a 2-for-15 three-point shooting effort.

Thanks to Hayes, Azubuike and Randolph Morris, who had 14 points and nine rebounds, Kentucky enjoyed a 44-31 edge on the boards.

"That's a very good basketball team," Perry said of Kentucky, "one that will challenge for a national championship."

Injury ruins Tech's win over Ark.-L.R.

By Paul Newberry

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — A gruesome injury ruined the night for No. 3 Georgia Tech.

The Yellow Jackets lost one of their most promising players when freshman Jeremis Smith dislocated his right kneecap in the closing minutes of a 79-54 victory over Arkansas-Little Rock on Friday night.

"I've never experienced something like that," freshman Anthony Morrow said. "I couldn't even look at his mouth (sitting in the stands). I was almost teary eyed."

B.J. Elder scored 23 points and Georgia Tech (3-0) was never threatened after starting the game with a 23-1 run.

The injury to Smith cast a pall over the victory. With just 1:24 remaining and Georgia Tech leading 77-52, Zack Wright drove toward the basket for Arkansas-Little Rock.

Smith moved over, trying to take the charge, but landed awkwardly on his right knee and collapsed at the court. A hush fell over the crowd when the youngster screamed in agony.

A wheelchair was brought on the court, but Smith was unable to get to the floor. Finally, four teammates came out to lift him onto a stretcher and Smith was wheeled away as a trainer held



Georgia Tech's Jeremis Smith screams in pain after dislocating his right kneecap late in Friday night's game.

the grotesquely distorted knee.

"I can't explain it," Elder said. "It was like his knee was completely turned around on the side. That's something I've never seen before."

Smith was taken to a hospital for X-rays, which provided a bit of good news: There was no other damage to the knee. He was being kept overnight and will undergo more tests on Monday.

Even in the best-case scenario, the injury would be similar to the one sustained by another Georgia

Tech player, Theodis Tarver, before last season. He was out for 2½ months and didn't fully recover until this summer.

"You never want to see this happen to anyone, but especially to someone who works as hard as Jeremis does and loves to play as much as he does," coach Paul Hewitt said. "We've got to think about his long-term recovery. As far as our team is concerned, we'll be fine."

The Yellow Jackets had an easy time after struggling to a

60-59 victory at Illinois-Chicago on Monday.

Arkansas-Little Rock (1-2) missed 11 of its first 12 shots and had five turnovers while Georgia Tech was pulling away. The Trojans shot just 29 percent in the first half, trailed 38-21 at the break and got no closer than 13 in the second half.

After Brandon Freeman's jumper pulled the Trojans to 5-2, the Yellow Jackets scored 18 in a row.

Knicks getting little reward for big payout

From wire reports

DALLAS — The New York Knicks won't win the championship this season.

But they have captured one title.

The Knicks are the league's highest-paid team in 2004-05. Salary figures obtained by The Dallas Morning News show that owner James Dolan has handed out \$101.3 million to assemble his team. The Mavericks and owner Mark Cuban are in second place, more than \$11 million behind the Knicks.

The four highest-paid players on New York's payroll — Allan Houston, Stephon Marbury, Anfernee Hardaway and Tim Thomas — combine to make \$59.68 million this season. That's more than 17 teams spend on their entire roster.

Money is clearly no object in



Notes

New York. The next step for this team is to climb above .500.

Here are a few other numbers, trends and statistical oddities to wrap your arms around.

■ More than \$1.7 billion is devoted to player salaries this season.

■ The NBA uses a soft cap. Very soft. Only three of the league's 30 teams are under the \$33.87 million bar.

■ The average salary is \$4.018 million.

■ We've heard that money can't buy happiness. Well, it doesn't necessarily buy a championship, either. The defending champion Detroit Pistons rank in the bottom half of the league's pay scale at No. 19. The San Antonio Spurs, the team that won the title before the Pistons, rank in the bottom third at No. 24.

■ Chicago is paying more money (\$14.9 million) to players no longer on its roster than any team in the league. Eddie Robinson (\$5.05 million) and Scottie Pippen (\$5 million) constitute the majority of the hit.

■ The big money position is shooting guard. Eight players make more than \$12.5 million this season, more than any other position.

■ Houston's Dikembe Mutombo earns a relatively modest salary of \$4.49 million. But add the \$14.27 million buyout he received from New Jersey (carried on the Nets' books this season) and his \$18.7 million ranks behind only Miami's Shaquille O'Neal.

■ O'Neal is the league's highest-paid player. The \$27.6 million he pulls down is more than the expansion Charlotte Bobcats spend (\$22.2 million) on their roster.

Vanishing Vince?

Toward whom was Raptors coach Sam Mitchell directing his postgame rant after Toronto lost Tuesday at Washington?

"For the ones who don't want to play, do everybody a favor: Quit," Mitchell said while also comparing his team to the Washington Generals, the longtime foils of the Harlem Globetrotters.

The Raptors staged a fourth-quarter comeback that fell short against Washington, but this time Vince Carter was a part of it.

Mitchell had benched Carter in the fourth quarter of three games, including last Sunday's rally from a 19-point deficit in a victory over San Antonio.

Carter has said he wants to be traded, with New York his preferred destination.

He has been booed at home by the dwindling crowds at the Air Canada center, his popularity hav-

ing plummeted even lower than his career-low scoring average of 15.9 points.

First-year Raptors general manager Rob Babcock may find himself at a point where he cannot get equal value for Carter if he continues to insist that any team acquiring Carter also take on the contract of Jalen Rose, who makes \$14.5 million this season and \$15.7 million next season.

The Knicks are one of the few teams that could be willing to take Rose along with Carter, who makes \$12.6 million this season.

Trade rules would require New York to exchange at least \$24 million in salaries to get back Carter and Rose, but an offer including Allan Houston (\$17.5 million), Penny Hardaway (\$14.6 million) or Tim Thomas (\$12.9 million) would soak up a large portion of that obligation.

In the meantime, Mitchell is struggling to coax effort out of players who expect major personnel changes to arrive at any minute.

"If I'm going to get fired, I'm going to get fired doing it my way," declared Mitchell, who said he was "losing his mind" because of his team's shabby play.

"I hope he doesn't lose it totally. It's only the first two or three weeks of the season. We have five or six months to go. I hope he stays sane." Raptors guard Rafer Alston said.

Olowokandi benched again

Minnesota Timberwolves center Michael Olowokandi was suspended by the team for a second game Friday night, one day after police used a stun gun to subdue him when he refused to leave a club.

Olowokandi was not with the Timberwolves for their game against the Memphis Grizzlies, but will join the team for Sunday's game at Sacramento.

"We are hopeful that Michael can put this incident behind him and look forward to him helping us on the court for the remainder of the season," said Kevin McHale, Minnesota's vice president of basketball operations.

Olowokandi was taken into custody about 3 a.m. Thursday after he refused to leave an Indianapolis club, police said. He was charged with disorderly conduct and criminal trespassing, both misdemeanors.

The center was suspended for Thursday night's game against the Indiana Pacers for "conduct detrimental to the team."

Coach Flip Saunders talked about the episode before Friday's game, and addressed why the team does not have a curfew.

"These are grown men," Saunders said. "You step in when you see it affecting your play or the organization."

Olowokandi is averaging 5.3 points and 5.2 rebounds.

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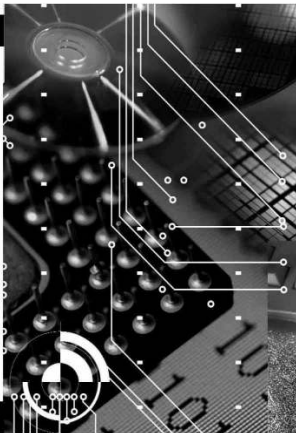
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Nebraska ends with first losing record in 43 years

BY RICH KAIPUST
Omaha World-Herald

LINCOLN, Neb. — If the Nebraska football program had to take a step back this season before it starts going forward again, it became official Friday.

In terms of win-loss records, it will stand as the biggest step back in 43 years.

"The way I see this is that great empires, they fall," Husker sophomore quarterback Joe Dailey said. "Great leaders, they fall. And great college football teams, they fall. Sometimes you need to start over again in order to really appreciate what happened in the past. That's exactly what's happened."

“The way I see this is that great empires, they fall. Great leaders, they fall. And great college football teams, they fall.”

Joe Dailey
Nebraska quarterback

The 42-year run of non-losing seasons? Over.

"I feel like it hasn't really set all the way in yet," Nebraska junior defensive tackle Titus Adams said. "I know that it is a shock. There's just a lot that's been going on, and it doesn't really feel right."

Change didn't come without a price in 2004. Nebraska installed a new offense and totally revamped its defensive coaching staff.

Neither unit ever quite com-

pletely put things together, and never was that more apparent than Friday as the Nebraska season ended at 5-6 overall and 3-5 in the Big 12 Conference.

The Husker offense had 11 total yards and no first downs in the first quarter. By the time they got untracked late in the third, they already trailed 26-7.

The Husker defense allowed 198 rushing yards and 420 overall against Colorado (7-4, 4-4). The Buffaloes might have set the tone early with a 14-play, 90-yard scoring drive on their first possession.

Nebraska's last-gasp effort to save valuable streaks included two fourth-quarter scores before time ran out on the season.

"We were in position today to win a game and we just didn't get it done," Nebraska Coach Bill Callahan said. "We felt very confident coming in, and we just didn't play our best today."

Asked if the first step in the process was harder or longer than he anticipated, Callahan talked instead of the future. He said he doesn't foresee any coaching staff changes ahead and said recruiting will continue to be a key

"We're building for a champion-



Nebraska's Grant Mulkey, left, is tackled by Colorado's Brian Iwuh on Friday. Nebraska won't be going to a bowl for the first time in 36 years.

ship season and I don't want to get away from that," Callahan said. "That's our goal, to win a national championship. It's going to take time. How much time? I don't know."

"We set a good foundation to build upon, in terms of some of the things that we did this year. I'm confident that this group will bounce back and we'll have success in the future."



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Twenty years later, 'The Pass' lives on

Players, fans still remember Flutie's 48-yard heave to top Miami

BY HOWARD ULMAN
The Associated Press

BOSTON — The Pass is still shown over and over on television — Doug Flutie's 48-yard touchdown heave through a misty night sky in Miami that landed in Gerard Phelan's hands and football lore.

On the day after Thanksgiving 20 years ago, Boston College's colorful quarterback connected on the last play to win that game 47-45, then kept winning — the Heisman Trophy and the Cotton Bowl when it was a big event.

"The fact we're still talking about it 20 years later makes it seem the more impressive," Flutie said, "not the play itself, but the whole hey around it. It makes it seem more significant."

And not only to the players involved.

"The thing I marvel at is the impact it has had on the sports fan," Phelan said. "Over time, you discover greatness. If it stands the test of time it must be great."

Phelan is an executive with a Boston-area printing firm and said he's asked about the play every day. Flutie is still a quarterback, filling a backup role for the San Diego Chargers at age 42.

"Ever since I was 30 years old,

I kept saying, 'Two more years, two more years.' I was hoping to have a decent professional career," he said. "Ever since I was 40, I've said, 'Well, maybe one more.'"

In 1984, the Hurricanes were the defending national champions and had Bernie Kosar at quarterback. The Eagles had grown from a weak program to a powerhouse in Flutie's four years.

They met in Miami on Nov. 23, 1984. Flutie threw for 472 yards and three touchdowns, Kosar threw for 447 yards and two touchdowns and the teams combined for more than 1,200 yards.

On the sidelines, coaches Jimmy Johnson of Miami and Jack Bicknell of Boston College faced the same dilemma. So did Miami secondary coach Butch Davis, now head coach of the Cleveland Browns: How do we shut these guys down?

"I swear we were playing our tails off, but it was one of those things. We couldn't stop them," said Bicknell, now a coach in NFL Europe, "but the other quarterback was pretty darn good."

Not as good as Flutie, the supremely confident scrambler who was listed by the school as 5-foot-9 inches tall but told reporters he was 5-9. So when Miami

took a 45-41 lead with 28 seconds left on Melvin Bratton's fourth touchdown, he didn't give up.

The Eagles got the ball back at their 20-yard line with 28 seconds left.

In the huddle, Flutie told his teammates if they could get the ball to the 50 they had a chance. They got to the Miami 48 but there were only six seconds left.

The next play was called "Flood Tip." Three receivers run down the right side into the end zone and one is supposed to tip the ball to another.

But first Flutie had to throw it 63 yards, having ended up on his own 37 when he rolled out to the right.

"He threw this beautiful spiral," said Reid Oslin, who was BC's sports information director and was on the field. "It went over the Miami defenders and you couldn't see who was back there from our vantage point."

"All of a sudden, the back judge just put up his hands and walked off the field. The guy never changed the expression on his face and that was it."

There was no time left. The dramatic battle of two powerful offenses was over.

"That last play, call it luck or call it whatever you want, was

just an exclamation point on the game," Bicknell said.

It was the only nationally televised college game of the day, and fans who had gathered with their families for the Thanksgiving weekend watched it together. One of those was Tom Coughlin, Flutie's quarterback coach before becoming an assistant with the Philadelphia Eagles in 1984.

"He was watching it on a couch with his kids," Bicknell said. "He said the couch almost went over backwards because he was so excited."

That play, combined with the success of Flutie and the team, led to increased admissions applications at BC and helped football recruiting. The Eagles went to bowl games in Flutie's last three seasons after going to just three in their history. Flutie went on to play in the U.S. Football League, the Canadian Football League and the NFL.

"Although I'd love for everybody to remember a lot of the other things I've achieved in my career, at least I have that signature moment to be remembered by," he said. "Very few days go by without it being brought up."

Even the quarterback who led this year's Eagles to an outstanding season and an almost certain bowl game was affected by the play.



Boston College quarterback Doug Flutie celebrates with brother Darren after defeating the Miami Hurricanes on Nov. 23, 1984.

"I had seen it was I was a little kid," Paul Peterson said. "All I knew about Boston College before I came here was that, really."

Other team members have had successful careers. Running back Troy Stadford is a sports radio broadcaster in Miami, offensive lineman Mark MacDonald is a doctor in Minnesota, fullback Steve Strachan is a vice president of a software company and linebacker Bill Romanowski had a long NFL career.

One thing hasn't changed in the past 20 years.

"It's still great to see the replay," Oslin said. "Phelan still catches it every time."

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by an Eastern Conference foe
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Taking care of business

No. 6 Texas tops A&M again, stays in hunt for BCS berth

BY JIM VERTUNO

The Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas took care of its fiercest in-state rival and ensured at least one more week of bickering about the Bowl Championship Series.

Cedric Benson ran for 165 yards and a touchdown Friday to lead No. 22 Texas to a 26-13 victory over No. 22 Texas A&M, the Longhorns' fifth straight win over the Aggies.

Afterward, Texas coach Mack Brown made a passionate case for his team to win an at-large bid in the BCS.

"If you've got a vote, vote for us," Brown said, pleading directly to voters in The Associated Press writers poll. "I'm asking you to do that and I'm asking everyone across the nation."

"This team deserves to be in the BCS," he said. "They deserve to go more than some teams that are being talked about."

The AP poll is one of the factors used to determine the BCS standings.

The victory could get the Longhorns (10-1, 7-1 Big 12) their first BCS bid if they get a big enough boost in the standings to pass fourth-place California. Texas fans chanted "B-C-S!" after the game.

California, which only a week ago thought it had locked up a berth in the Rose Bowl, needs a win Dec. 4 at Southern Mississippi to fight off the Longhorns, who are fifth in the standings.

Another team out West, Boise State, could ruin the party for both of them. If Boise State creeps into the top six in the BCS, they would join Utah in the two at-large berths, knocking Texas and California out of the mix.

Where? As complicated as that sounds, the game itself was full of strange and rare plays that saw momentum swing back and forth during the first three quarters.

Quarterback Vince Young had 224 yards and a touchdown run for the Longhorns. His counterpart, Reggie McNeal, passed for 247 yards and a touchdown for A&M (7-4, 5-3).

The teams traded touchdowns and missed extra points in a tight first half. Benson had 105 yards on 18 carries in the half, but one play on which he didn't get the ball proved costly for the Longhorns.

After driving 88 yards to the A&M 1, Texas was on the verge of punching the ball into the end zone with less than 30 seconds left in the half. Instead of handing off to Benson, the 6-foot-5 Young tried to leap



Texas running back Cedric Benson is tripped up by a Texas A&M defender during the third quarter in Austin, Texas, on Friday. Benson ran for 165 yards in the Longhorns' 26-13 victory, keeping Texas in the running for a BCS bowl berth.

over the line of scrimmage.

Holding the ball in his right hand, he stretched for the goal line and A&M's Justin Warren punched it loose. The ball bounced right to Jonte Buhl, who scooped it up and dashed 98 yards for a touchdown and a 13-6 Aggies lead at halftime.

The play stunned Texas, which thought

Young had crossed the goal line — although television replays showed he didn't. Young stood looking around while Buhl raced for end zone and Brown grimaced on the sideline.

Then things got really weird.

After forcing the Aggies to punt on the first possession of the third quarter, Texas'

Michael Griffin blocked the kick and Bobby Tatum recovered it for a TD.

"We knew we had to get momentum back. That was huge," said Texas senior linebacker Derrick Johnson, who had eight tackles and one sack. "The posse came up with a big play."

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